



I'M REALLY A SUPERSTAR

BOOK 12

Chang Yu

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

I'm Really A Superstar

(我真是大明星)

by

Chang Yu

(尝谕)

Synopsis

Zhang Ye was originally a mundane college graduate with aspiring dreams to become a star, but unfortunately has below average looks and height. However one day, he woke up and suddenly found himself in a parallel world!

It's like the same world, but wait a minute...many brands, celebrities and even famous works from his world changed and are gone in this new world!

Armed with the profound literary knowledge of his previous world and a heaven-defying Game Ring that gives him magical items, stats and skills, Zhang Ye embarks on a journey to pursue his life-long dream of becoming famous!

Follow Zhang Ye as he takes the new world by storm, one plagiarized piece at a time, to hilarious reactions!

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Chapter 1001: King of Masked Singers premieres!

Noon.

At Old Rao's house, the place was full of the smell of medicinal herbs.

Zhang Ye yelled while lying on the sofa, "Is it done yet?"

Yang Shu speedily answered, "Senior bro, it's almost ready, it's almost ready!"

Zhang Ye howled, "Hurry up! I can't take it anymore!"

"Master Rao, please hurry!" Yang Shu urged from the kitchen.

Rao Aimin shouted across the living room, "If you make another sound, trust me, I will throw you out! Concocting the medicine requires proper heat! What are you so anxious for! It's still being bubbled!"

Zhang Ye stopped pestering Rao Aimin out of fear and turned to Chenchen, who was doing her homework. "Chenchen, fetch me a glass of water. I'm thirsty, so be quick."

Chenchen said, "Not gonna."

"In that case, I won't help you do your homework in the future!" Zhang Ye harrumphed.

Chenchen became flustered. "Zhang Ye, are you really that weak?!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Get me some water."

Chenchen begrudgingly went to get the water for him and nearly even had to feed it to him.

Zhang Ye lay there all relaxed and gulped down two mouthfuls. Then he said, rather displeased, "Why is the water cold? Bring me warm water next time, understand?"

Chenchen got annoyed and ran to the kitchen to complain, "Aunt! Who does Zhang Ye think he is!"

But Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro's old injuries have relapsed and he's a sick person now. Why are you arguing with him?"

Chenchen was exasperated. "But he's such a bully!"

From the living room, Zhang Ye shouted again. "The food isn't done either? Why is it taking so long! I've been hungry for a whole day! Does anyone care about me?"

Yang Shu immediately replied, "Senior Bro, I'll serve you the food!"

Only Zhang Ye's junior martial sister would readily be at his beck and call to take care of him.

"Senior Bro, sit up and eat."

"I can't move."

"I'll feed you then."

"My junior martial sis is the best."

"Open your mouth."

"Mmm, the chicken wing is not too bad."

"Try some of the red braised pork."

"Mmm, it's good too, but a bit salty."

"Ah, a little salty? Then what should we do?"

"Forget it, I'll make do with it."

Rao Aimin could not stand watching this any further and took a few steps out of the kitchen and said to Yang Shu, "Ignore him. This fellow's just trying to score some pity points! Just place the food on the table. I'll see if he wants to eat or not!"

Chenchen added angrily, "Old Yang, don't care for him!"

But Yang Shu did not listen to them as she continued spoon-

feeding Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye lay there comfortable as a lord, opening his mouth and swallowing the food, then opening his mouth again with the next spoonful already waiting for him. After they finished eating lunch, the medicinal herb concoction was ready. His junior martial sister spoonfed him again. But after just two mouthfuls, Zhang Ye cried out that it was too bitter and refused to drink anymore.

"Senior Bro!"

"This is not something a human can drink!"

"If you don't drink it, how can you heal your injuries?!"

"What's inside this?!"

"A soil dragon."

"What's that?"

"An earthworm."

"The hell! Are you guys trying to poison me!"

With great difficulty, Zhang Ye finally finished drinking the medicine. Rao Aimin then began to treat him externally. She gave him a traditional Chinese massage to help with his qi and blood circulation. But with just two massage rubs, Zhang Ye cried out again.

The entire time the sun was shining, there was not a moment of peace in the house as every one of them took care of Zhang Ye!

It wasn't until evening that this fellow finally ceased his antics. This was because the King of Masked Singers' premiere episode was about to begin!

Zhang Ye had taken over the whole sofa and occupied it by himself, lying there with his legs up. Be it Rao Aimin, Chenchen, or Yang Shu, they could only move some chairs over and sit beside him.

On Beijing Television, the commercials ended.

Yang Shu said, "It's starting!"

Zhang Ye said, "Turn up the volume."

...

His first uncle's house.

His first uncle and aunt brought out a fruit platter.

In the living room, Zhang Ye's three cousins were all sitting there watching the television. They had arranged to meet up today to watch the King of Masked Singers' premiere episode together as it was a new show planned by their cousin.

"Wow, it's starting, it's finally starting!"

"The first contestant has appeared!"

"What? King of Oddity? What sort of name is this!"

"Holy shit!"

"Ah, he sang so well!"

"The pitch changes were really nice!"

"Who is he?"

"Greater China's Cui Long?"

"It's not him, it's definitely not him! The figure doesn't look like him at all!"

"Then could it be CAK?"

"The voice sounds super similar!"

The three cousins were excited and astonished by what they were watching.

His first uncle and aunt were seated near them and glanced at the screen. With this, they were immediately hooked on the show and joined in with their own guesses.

...

Peking University.

In one of the female dormitories.

Yao Jiancai's daughter, Yao Mi, did not go home for the weekend, instead staying in her dorm together with a few of her roommates to watch the broadcast of the King of Masked Singers. The more the merrier, they thought. Somehow, they'd gotten ahold of a 29-inch LCD TV, and they'd even hooked it up to an antenna in their dorm. There were a total of 11 people in the room, and all were watching the television in excitement, some of them even singing along.

"It's good! It's so good that I'm crying!"

"I really love Petal Shower!"

"There isn't anyone else in the music industry with such a falsetto!"

"Who exactly is she?"

"The panel of guest judges couldn't guess either?"

"Mimi, hahaha, your dad has spoken!"

"Your dad sure is funny! He definitely deserves to be a big shot in the crosstalk world!"

"It's sad that our Professor Zhang isn't around. It would be even more exciting to watch then!"

"When will Teacher Zhang come back and teach us again? Has he really been banned? Did the air pollution documentary affect him that greatly? How could they ban Teacher Zhang!"

...

Media College.

At the teaching staff's quarters.

Su Hongyan, once Zhang Ye's student counselor, was also

watching the show on Beijing Television with some of her colleagues.

"This is really great!"

"Their singing is much more professional than those on The Voice!"

"It's gotta be. The selling point is different. The selling point of The Voice of China was its grassroots contestants, while for King of Masked Singers, the contestants are already famous singers, so of course their skills aren't the same! Frankly, the creativity of this show is great. Only someone like our Media College's Professor Little Zhang can come up with a show like this!"

"Sunflower sang well!"

"He's quite good, but I still prefer Sunset Glow. How did she lose to the others? Will she get eliminated? Who's gonna be crowned Masked King at the end of this episode?"

...

It blew up on the Internet as well!

Overwhelming exclamations and responses started appearing all over Weibo!

"This is really worth goddamn waiting for!"

"So this is King of Masked Singers!"

"Damn, it's 10,000 times better than I expected!"

"So this is what this show is all about! This group of people can really sing well, right? I bet they're all professional singers. And A or B-list big name celebs?"

"Who knows who King of Oddity is!"

"I really like King of Oddity too. His voice is really pleasant and his singing is pretty good, but compared to Petal Shower and the others, he doesn't quite measure up. Petal Shower and Sunflower,

on the other hand, are gods!"

"Four contestants have already appeared onstage! And each one is more amazing than the last!"

"The next person is coming on right now!"

"The Clown?"

"I heard a rumor that he was this episode's Masked King?"

"That can't be! Probably a rumor?"

"Right, someone even said that Water Buffalo was the Masked King. Your sister's the water buffalo! There's not even a fucking contestant named Water Buffalo!"

"Look at how he's walking! He can't even stand straight!"

"Is he sick?"

The broadcast now cut to a different scene at an earlier time.

It was showing the moments in the infirmary.

Zhang Ye probably did not even know that while he and the program team staff were in the infirmary, someone had actually lugged a video camera in and recorded many of the scenes that had occurred inside!

A fever of 40 degrees!

A severe cold!

Inflammation of the tonsils!

"Give me a cortisone shot!"

"Are you sure!?"

"Do it!"

"Give me another shot!"

"Shoot me up again!"

"Do it!"

Three shots!

A total of three shots!

The man in the clown mask did not even make a sound!

The scene cut again, back to the moment when The Clown appeared onstage!

At this moment, everyone who was watching the program in front of their televisions gasped in shock. Some of the music industry insiders were also surprised by this!

A madman!

This person must be insane!

"This...this..."

"He's really risking his life!"

"Why's he still singing when he's like that? How can he even sing?"

"Yeah, he's definitely not going to be the Masked King. Those must've been rumors."

"True. It's hard to walk around or even speak with a voice like that, much less sing a song! Can he even make any noise? He won't finish singing, right?"

"How could he possibly finish singing in that condition!"

It wasn't just The Clown who had behind-the-scenes footage edited into the show. There was also behind-the-scenes footage for the other masked singers. For instance, Petal Shower when she was rehearsing her songs and Sunflower's comments on the other singers' performances while he was in his waiting room. But clearly, The Clown's behind-the-scenes footage was more shocking than the others'. The program team definitely knew this, so they purposely edited this scene in.

However, when The Clown took the stage and started singing, a

lot of people got a great shock!

Petal Shower's falsetto had shocked them!

Sunflower in the Starlight's tenor had shocked them!

Sunset Glow's gentle and soothing voice had shocked them!

But those were completely different from the shock The Clown thrust upon them. The Clown's song shocked them because it was pure and resonated with their souls!

"I am a wolf that comes from the north.

"Padding through the boundless wilderness.

"The mournful northern wind blows by.

"The slow sand brushes by."

Everyone's had a dream before.

Everyone's pursued those dreams before.

But for the sake of that grassland, that dream, a person like The Clown faced the biting winds while wounded and continued limping forward. No one could say that they had gone that far themselves!

So they were shocked!

Touched!

"Who is he!"

"This guy has such stage presence!"

"A wolf that comes from the north?"

"Doesn't that sound so cool?"

"Does it sound that great? I think it's just average."

"Me too. I'm not really moved. And his voice is too hoarse!"

"That's why it's good!"

"What do you guys know! This singing is filled with so much

emotion!"

"The song itself is good too! What song is this, goddammit! Why haven't I heard before?"

...

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye watched his onscreen self and had mixed feelings about it.

Yang Shu was fascinated by the song. "This song is really good, really!"

Rao Aimin did not say anything. Actually, she seldom watched television shows, but ever since she became Zhang Ye's agent, she started paying attention to them.

Chenchen pointed at the television and said, "Just look at him!"

Rao Aimin said, "He insists on taking the stage while badly sick. This perseverance and resilience is not something that just any ordinary person possesses. This man's not bad."

Zhang Ye was elated when he heard.

Hehe.

Good enough.

Yang Shu immediately said, "My senior bro is also someone with strong perseverance!"

Rao Aimin glanced at Yang Shu and pointed to Zhang Ye, who was lying crooked on the sofa like a slob. "You talkin' 'bout this guy?"

Yang Shu was stumped. She wanted to speak up but hesitated and hung her head in silence, apparently rather embarrassed by him.

Zhang Ye couldn't defend himself.

Chapter 1002: The King of Masked Singers is on fire!

On TV.

The Clown had narrowly defeated The Yak.

The netizens started an endless debate.

"Was there even a need to think? Of course the vote goes to The Clown!"

"It actually got decided by just a few votes?"

"This song that The Yak performed was much worse than The Clown's!"

"Yeah, what were the live audience members thinking!"

"Even a fool should be able to deduce which was the better song. How could The Clown have nearly lost this round? "

Next up, the three defeated contestants proceeded to the elimination round and battled each other.

The three contestants were: King of Oddity, Sunset Glow, and The Yak.

This segment was recorded after Zhang Ye had left the studio that day. He had not watched it yet and was naturally interested as he stared unblinkingly at the television.

King of Oddity kicked off the elimination round of performances.

He stuck to his beautiful portamento technique and rap, and he performed well.

After him was Sunset Glow.

"Do you remember what we used to have?"

"Holding hands and living simply."

"We weren't yet 18 then."

"But we'd still speak our minds to each other."

It was a love song.

A slow but tasteful love song.

In this second round of performances, Sunset Glow performed rather stunningly. There were no higher pitches, none at all, but she still managed to capture the hearts of many in the audience!

The three contestants took their turns and finished performing.

Eventually, the results of the voting came out!

Sunset Glow easily remained in the competition while The Yak and King of Oddity were both eliminated!

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The live audience all stood up and started shouting!

Chen Guang also stood up!

Amy also said excitedly, "Who are you!"

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "You can choose to reveal your identity, or you can choose to exit the stage with your mask on."

King of Oddity laughed a little and thought for a moment. Then he grabbed his mask and took it off with everyone's attention on him.

When the television audience saw the face beneath the mask, many of them were startled!

Chen Guang was stunned. "Little Chi?"

King of Oddity smiled and said, "Hello, Senior Bro."

Amy also knew him personally. "Oh my god! How could it be you!"

Chi Yi! It was Chi Yi, who was from the same agency as Chen

Guang!

The Internet also blew up!

"Damn! It's our Chi Yi!"

"Why is it him?"

"Man, that's a C-list celebrity!"

"In the music industry, Chi Yi was considered quite a big name some years ago. When he first debuted, he was known as a pretty boy to many and had also won an award for best song! He had a glorious past and surely counted as one of the top 30 people in the music industry at that time. But later, for reasons unknown, he stopped releasing albums and switched to acting in movies. Although he was also very popular in the film industry and is a C-list celebrity now, a lot of people still felt it sad that he did not continue his singing career!"

"Why would he be participating in this show?"

"Has Chi Yi gone back to singing?"

"He sang really well! His singing is as good as before!"

"Ahhh, my Little Chi!"

This was an extremely popular celebrity idol!

What's more, Chi Yi was a C-list celebrity as well!

After the astonishment faded, everyone thought of something. For someone who was so popular and good at singing, and had been even a professional singer, if this was any other singing show, he definitely would have been saved for a much later appearance. But on the stage of King of Masked Singers, Chi Yi had actually been eliminated in the first episode? What the fuck?! Then who the hell could the remaining masked singers be?! Thinking of this, the audience's curiosity suddenly erupted!

King of Oddity turned out to be Chi Yi!

Then who was the other one?

Who was The Yak?

The camera cut to The Yak.

Dong Shanshan asked, "You can choose to reveal your identity, or you can—"

"I choose not to reveal my identity," said The Yak before Dong Shanshan could finish.

The audience was taken aback.

Amy asked anxiously, "Why not?"

Zhang Xia persuaded, "I don't think it matters much as those who reveal their identities are definitely not considered losers. There aren't any losers at all here today. Also, we really wish to know who you are."

Wang Zhuishu added, "You sang really well!"

But The Yak did not say anything.

Dong Shanshan nodded and said, "OK, we respect your choice."

The Yak bowed to the audience and then mysteriously departed from the stage just like that, still wearing his mask. Perhaps no one in the audience would ever know who this man was.

The netizens were all vexed.

"Reveal your identity, dammit!"

"faints Why didn't he reveal himself?"

"How very suspenseful!"

"Who could that guy be?"

"flips table I'm so pissed!"

Everyone could only feel that way. If the contestant did not want to reveal their identity, there was nothing they could do about it!

"It's time for the next round!"

"Right, it's time to battle for the first episode's Masked King!"

"Who do you guys think has the best chance of winning?"

"Sunflower of course!"

"Definitely Petal Shower!"

"Right, it's basically just between these two. Although I also like The Clown, his voice is really not in good shape. It sounds quite hoarse, and judging from the earlier voting by the live audience members, The Clown stands no chance."

"But why are there people saying that The Clown was crowned the first episode's Masked King?"

"That's not possible."

"It's probably just a rumor."

"When he's like that, how can he fight for the throne of the Masked King?"

"Yeah, whether he can even sing his next song at all is questionable."

...

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye had been through the final round of this episode's competition and already knew the results, so he didn't have much interest in the latter part of the show. As he watched, his eyes began to droop and he fell asleep unknowingly.

By the time he opened his eyes again, it was already the next morning. He had fallen asleep on the sofa, and someone had covered him with a blanket. The sky was bright and the chirping of birds drifted in from outside.

Zhang Ye got up from the sofa and went to the bathroom. He could feel that his body was in much better condition now. It seemed that Old Rao's medicinal herb concoction was actually

quite effective, and he didn't drink it for nothing.

The front door opened.

Yang Shu came back carrying some things.

"Senior Bro, you're up?"

"Where'd you go?"

"To buy breakfast for you."

"Oh."

"By the way, here's today's newspapers."

Zhang Ye felt rather happy deep down inside. It was worth taking in this junior martial sister of his. Just look at all that she had done. "Where's Old Rao and Chenchen?"

"Master Rao took the kid out for morning exercises," Yang Shu replied.

Zhang Ye nodded then flipped open one of the newspapers.

"Chi Yi participates in King of Masked Singers!"

"King of Masked Singers' premiere episode! Chi Yi gets eliminated!"

"The Clown crowned first Masked King!"

"'Wild Rose' search term trends to top spot!"

"King of Masked Singers' premiere episode a hit! Trending #1 on Weibo! "

"Who is The Clown? "

"Speculation on Petal Shower's identity! "

The newspapers were all full of news regarding King of Masked Singers!

While eating breakfast, Zhang Ye browsed through Weibo and realized that there were also an overwhelming amount of discussions online!

"That was so fun!"

"King of Masked Singers' first episode was so damn interesting!"

"Much love to Petal Shower!"

"Much love to The Clown. I love him so much!"

"The Clown was so cool. That last song, 'Wild Rose,' made me cry for real!"

"Me too. 'I am a beautiful, beautiful wild rose.' I was totally pulled in and have already listened to it more than 10 times. Each time I hear it, I shed some tears!"

"Poor Chi Yi!"

"Chi Yi is supposed to be a really good singer and very popular too. How did he get eliminated!"

"The Yak is such a coward! He was too scared to even show his face!"

"Yeah, what a cheat! Even now, no one knows who he is!"

"When will the next episode be broadcast? Hurry up! I can't wait! I wanna continue listening to The Clown sing! His songs are so amazingly touching!"

"The next Masked King will definitely be Sunflower!"

"Get lost! It'll definitely be our Petal Shower!"

"Who's the most popular right now?"

"A poll shows that most people are interested in The Clown."

"The Clown? He only won because of luck."

"Nonsense! Go and check out today's Top Chinese Music Chart!"

Zhang Ye decided to do so. He found out that on the music industry's authoritative Top Chinese Music Chart, seven out of the top ten spots were taken by songs that were performed on King of Masked Singers!

#10: King of Oddity's "Idiot."

#9: A new song by a big name of the music industry.

#8: Sunflower in the Starlight's "Like Smoke, As Water."

#7: Sunset Glow's "My Past Lover."

#5: The Clown's "Wolf."

#4: Petal Shower's "On a Little Night Like This."

#3 was the song that Zhang Ye wrote and composed for Spring Garden—"Super Star." This song had already been charting for some time.

Number 2 was also another song performed by Petal Shower.

Then, impressively, at first place was "Wild Rose"!

Even on the monthly rankings of the Top Chinese Music Chart, although "Wild Rose" had only charted for a day since getting published last night, it had already shot up on the monthly chart to 11th!

In only a single day!

In the short span of barely a day!

"Wild Rose" had been shared and recommended like crazy!

Zhang Ye was sitting in the apartment and eating breakfast when he suddenly heard the tone-deaf singing of some men floating in from outside the windows. "I'm a beautiful, beautiful wild rose. / Hating the Heavens for being unfair."

There were already people who knew how to sing the song!

So you could imagine just how quickly the song had propagated through the masses!

Even Zhang Ye himself had not expected this. A slightly more niche song from his previous world had such a great influence and spread so quickly over here. Such news was very encouraging to him. Together with the newspaper articles and looking at the

heated discussions online, Zhang Ye could already feel it clearly.

King of Masked Singers was on fire!

Chapter 1003: Rankings and viewership ratings!

Later that morning.

His mother called him.

"Son, what are you up to?"

"Oh, I'm at Old Rao's place. How's your trip with Dad going?"

"It's quite nice and cozy here in Hainan. Oh right, I watched that new show of yours."

"Haha, so how was it?"

"It's fantastic! Your dad could not get enough and rewatched it."

"Which contestant do you like on the show?"

"I like Sunflower in the Starlight."

"Uh, what about dad?"

"Your dad likes Petal Shower."

"..."

"Son, what's the matter?"

"Ahem, nothing. Ai, enjoy your vacation."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye didn't know how to react. He initially thought that at least one of his parents would like The Clown. But as it turned out, neither of them mentioned him. He did not even have a chance to brag a little. What a failure! But that was just the first episode. Besides, his physical and voice conditions were not optimal during the recording of the episode. Zhang Ye was not worried at all since there were still plenty of opportunities to showcase himself in the future. As long as he did not get eliminated from the show, he would be able to bring out the songs he wanted to sing one by one.

Which song should he sing for the next episode?

An emotional song?

A happy song?

A song using his head voice?

Or something touching that would stir the hearts of the viewers?

He had to prepare two songs. What a headache that was!

Zhang Ye paced up and down Old Rao's living room as he started thinking and planning for the next round of competition. Now that he did not have any work or activities to keep him busy, he focused all his effort and time on the King of Masked Singers because this was his only way out after much brooding. He was left with no choice but to hide behind a mask and use a different method to roam the world with his pride.

Yang Shu looked at him and asked, "Senior Bro, are you feeling better?"

"I guess," Zhang Ye instinctively replied as he continued pacing.

At this moment, keys jangled from outside. Old Rao was back!

Yang Shu turned around and immediately opened the door. "Master Rao, Chenchen."

Rao Aimin grunted. "Where's Zhang Ye?"

Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro? Isn't he right here..." She turned around to point, but he was not there anymore. Zhang Ye was no longer pacing around the dining table.

"Eh? He's not up yet?" Rao Aimin looked to the sofa.

She saw Zhang Ye lying on the sofa, groaning and whining like he was about to die.

Zhang Ye pleaded, "Old Rao, get me a cup of water."

Rao Aimin said, "Fuck off."

"But I'm thirsty."

"Get it yourself!"

"Chenchen, get it for me. I can't move."

Yang Shu's jaw dropped!

...

Within the industry.

At a television station.

"If we had known—even if we had to pay 30 million RMB for the breach of contract back then—we should still have headhunted Zhang Ye from Central TV to join us! I'm sure that Central TV would've let him go for 30 million RMB!"

"Hai, it's useless to say anything now!"

"Zhang Ye's ideas are really creative!"

"Yeah, just him alone would be enough to sweep aside all of the production teams in the industry!"

"The King of Masked Singers is definitely gonna catch fire and will most likely subvert many of the things that we already know!"

"Yeah, just look at today's Top Chinese Music Chart. It's ludicrous. I have quite a few friends in the music industry and heard that there was an uproar there too. Songs performed on the show, which were broadcast just last night, actually charted on the Top Chinese Music Chart today? And many of the songs were covers too? They even occupied seven of the top ten spots on the chart? This is simply unbelievable. In the past, we had to go everywhere just to promote a new song. The companies would even have to throw money around in order to get an interview or get on a variety show. But now? They've achieved the same thing with just a TV show? And it even went further than that?"

"The ratings for 'Wild Rose' are too scary!"

"Who is this Clown person?"

"I don't know! Which big name in the music industry is he? He even managed to sing that well while sick?"

"'Wild Rose' has already stormed through the charts. It's already #1 on the daily Top Chinese Music Chart today. In a few more days, I suppose the monthly #1 spot is as good as theirs. How scary! This is insane!"

"What a subversive variety show!"

"Hai, Beijing TV has really gotten the most out of it this time!"

"There's no helping it. Zhang Ye is a Beijing local, after all! Dammit. With him there, who the hell can still vie with Beijing TV?"

"Has the viewership rating for their show been released yet?"

"Not yet, but it should be out sometime soon."

"Let's see what their viewership turns out to be first."

"Surely it won't be breaking another historical record, right?"

...

At an entertainment company.

"Little Xiao."

"Director Zhou."

"Did you watch the King of Masked Singers?"

"I did."

"What are your thoughts on it?"

"The contestants on the show are indeed very strong. I think that I may have identified one of them, but I'm not very sure. As for the others, I don't know since I really couldn't guess who they were."

"You're our company's highly prized newcomer. I have quite a good relationship with the King of Masked Singers' Executive

Director Hu Fei and already communicated with him. You can go and try out for the show."

"Do you think I'm good enough?"

"You're also a professional singer, so you need to have confidence in yourself. This show will definitely become popular; rather, it has already become very popular. Many companies are eyeing for a slice of this pie right now and they're all vying to send their celebrities to the show. If we don't act quickly, we likely wouldn't have another chance."

"Alright, I'll do as you say."

...

At Beijing Television.

In the King of Masked Singers' program team office.

A lot of people from the other program teams came by to "visit."

"Old Hu, you guys were really impressive this time!"

"Hai, not really."

"Your show has already become so popular, yet you're still being so humble? Hurry up and treat us already. You must definitely do so. We won't show up if the restaurant is too low-class!"

"Hur hur, let's wait until the viewership ratings are out. It looks like the show is very popular, but we still don't know how the results will turn out."

"Come on, you. The online discussions are already so overwhelming, and everyone in the industry is talking about your show. If your viewership rating is bad, I'll twist my head off and give it to you."

"Then I'll be hoping you're right."

Previously, they were the program team for Do You Remember. Although that show was quite good too back then, but all it was

was quite good. Hu Fei and the program team staff had never enjoyed such treatment before. A deputy station head and a station executive even made a visit to their office and sat around for a while before heading back to their own office for the day. Quite a few of their Beijing Television colleagues also came by to congratulate them, while a lot of media reporters bombarded the program team with calls.

Hou Ge said excitedly, "We're famous!"

Hou Di proclaimed, "I can't believe we got to see a day like this!"

"I feel like I'm living a dream." Xiao Lu was still getting used to this. "Did any of you receive any calls? I got two calls this morning from the other TV stations, looking to headhunt me. They offered me an annual package of 500,000 yuan! I was totally shocked! I've never even seen 500,000 yuan in my lifetime before!"

Dafei exclaimed, "Damn, why didn't anyone headhunt me?!"

Xiao Lu laughed and quipped, "'Cause you're ugly."

Dafei: "..."

Everyone laughed.

Hu Fei smiled and said, "Actually, we shouldn't be getting so carried away. For those of us who're involved, we know that this is all to the credit of Teacher Zhang."

Han Qi gave a wry smile and said, "Teacher Zhang is just too amazing."

Han Qi was a newcomer who had just transferred to the current program team. During the few times that Zhang Ye had come over, she had only seen him from a distance and did not have an opportunity to speak with him. At her level, she felt that she was not qualified to speak with him yet. This was Zhang Ye they were talking about, a big shot A-list celebrity and a very famous figure in the industry. As a result, she could only watch from afar even though she was a diehard Zhang Ye fan. However, Han Qi did not

know that she had already interacted with Zhang Ye many times.

Suddenly, hasty footfalls came running!

One of the program team employees rushed into the office and shouted excitedly, "It's here! The viewership ratings are out!"

Hu Fei quickly said, "How did we do?"

Hou Ge immediately tensed up. "How much did we get?"

Xiao Lu said anxiously, "What's our nationwide ranking?"

When that person handed the viewership ratings chart to Hu Fei, everyone instantly gathered around him!

"Let me take a look!"

"Don't block me!"

"How much did we get?"

"Just how much is it?"

Then, the numbers on the form appeared before everyone's eyes!

When they saw the numbers, shock jumped onto the program team's faces!

The nationwide viewership ratings for the King of Masked Singers premiere episode was—2.51%!

They were the #1 show nationwide!

They led by double the #2 show's viewership rating!

The office fell silent.

One second.

Two seconds.

Suddenly, ear-piercing screams rang out!

"Ahhh!"

"Number one! We're number one nationwide!"

"Holy shit! 2.51%!"

"It's really become popular this time! Our show's really a hit!"

"Heavens!"

"This is ridiculous!"

"It's even higher than The Voice's premiere episode rating?"

"Oh my god!"

Han Qi jumped for joy!

Xiao Lu was shrieking with excitement!

Cries of joy!

Cheering!

The office devolved into chaos!

Hu Fei suddenly said, "Quick, inform Little Zhang about this!"

Dafei quickly replied, "Let me do it. I'll give Teacher Zhang a call!"

Beijing Television burst into an uproar!

The industry was shocked by the viewership ratings!

This was just the premiere broadcast!

The first episode of the show!

But this episode has already fucking achieved a viewership rating of 2.51%? What does this mean? Do you all intend to fucking break the 4% mark? How can it possibly be so high?!

Chapter 1004: The Clown gets called out?

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye was still playing dead on the sofa when he received the call.

"Dafei, it's out?"

"Yeah! It's out!"

"How much?"

"2.51%!"

"Ah? How much again?"

"The premiere episode's viewership was 2.51%!"

"Is that figure from a draft report?"

"It's not! This is the actual viewership rating! Teacher Zhang, we've gotten first nationwide. Our premiere episode has taken the number one spot in the nationwide viewership ratings! You're so incredible!"

Dafei called his coworkers over to the phone.

Xiao Lu ran over and shouted into the phone: "Teacher Zhang, you're so amazing! So, so amazing! Hurry over. Brother Hu says that he'll be treating us to a meal, and the Station Head has announced that they'll be holding a celebratory banquet just for our program team, right after they gave us a letter of commendation and published it to the entire station! We're just lacking your presence now!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I won't be joining you guys today. I still have some things to attend to."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye kept quiet for a second before suddenly belly laughing!

#1 nationwide?

2.51%?

Another record has been broken!

In fact, Zhang Ye wasn't too sure how the show would perform before it was broadcast. It wasn't because he was not confident, but just that he was unable to put his finger on it. After all, the King of Masked Singers back in his previous world did not have that great of a viewership rating. It only managed around 1 to 2% tops. Zhang Ye had studied the shortcomings of the show closely in order to make the changes to the version in this world. Thus, he could not predict the results until the final moment when the results were released. From the looks of it, the viewership this time really did not disappoint him. In fact, it even exceeded the expectations that Zhang Ye had set for it by a great deal. It looked like the King of Masked Singers that he had made revisions to had been accepted by everyone. This was no doubt a boost to Zhang Ye, as even though he was neither the executive director nor the host, he was still part of the show. If the show became popular, Zhang Ye's popularity would get higher as a result.

He immediately went to check the Celebrity Rankings Index, hoping to see how much his popularity score had gone up by. He felt that it would surely be a sizable amount. However, when he checked the list, he was shocked to discover that his popularity score was actually dropping, although it was still within the A-list.

Damn!

What was happening?

Then, with a jolt, Zhang Ye facepalmed as he suddenly remembered that he was performing with a mask on, and no one knew that it was him who joined the competition. Therefore, it was impossible that he would be credited with any popularity as Zhang Ye. Having not been onscreen for some time and without a job, the A-list celebrities ranked behind him had started catching up relentlessly while Zhang Ye's popularity score was sliding back.

Zhang Ye could only smile helplessly at this. After his fever yesterday, he was probably feeling a little mixed up right now, but that didn't really matter. He would just have to leave this issue of his popularity score aside for now. He was sure that on the day that he revealed himself, all of that accumulated popularity would come back to him. Thinking of the arrival of such a day, Zhang Ye could no longer control his laughter as he wondered when he would achieve that explosion in popularity. But first, he would have to continue singing and not get eliminated midway through the show.

Tired from laughing, Zhang Ye took a breather and suddenly realized that everyone in the apartment was looking at him.

Rao Aimin was looking at him.

Chenchen was also staring at him.

Zhang Ye rubbed his face. "Why you lookin' at me?"

Rao Aimin narrowed her eyes. "Rascal, you're quite full of energy when you're laughing, aren't you?"

With that, Zhang Ye immediately collapsed back onto the sofa and said weakly, "It's the last gasp."

Rao Aimin sent a kick flying at him!

"So you were only pretending earlier?"

"Aiyo, what are you doing!"

"Get up!"

"Don't kick, don't kick!"

Chenchen shouted angrily, "Zhang Ye, you're so shameless! I thought that you were actually seriously injured! I even went to get you a cup of water! You...why are you not behaving like a proper adult!"

Zhang Ye got chased around the apartment. "I'm always the one being ordered around! Can't I be the one to order you guys around

for once? Aiyo, Old Rao, you're hitting me for real? Do you think I won't retaliate? Do you think that I can't beat you? You're more seriously injured than I am."

However, the facts had already proved that even if Rao Aimin's injuries have not recovered, even if her injuries were more serious than Zhang Ye's, he still couldn't beat her.

This fellow was actually much better, his injuries under control and regaining 40-50% of his stamina. He now had the foundation of a martial arts master, and his strength and stamina levels were maxed out after having eaten all those level 1 Fruits from the lottery draw. Once his injuries were alleviated and did not affect him as much, Zhang Ye's resilience and recovery rate would naturally be different from normal people's.

...

Medicinal herb concoction three times a day.

Traditional Chinese massage twice daily.

By the second day, Zhang Ye could already do some simple exercises.

By the third day, the rasp in Zhang Ye's voice started to disappear.

By the fourth day, Zhang Ye attempted singing two high notes and could practically hit them, except that he couldn't sustain them for long. If he did, his voice would end up trembling due to his vocal cords tightening.

By the fifth day, the side effects from the cortisone shots had almost subsided.

The doctor was right about the severe side effects of a cortisone shot, let alone the fact that he had received three shots. Even for someone with Zhang Ye's physique and condition, it still took him five days to recover from it. If it were a normal person, they would probably have taken more than a month to recover their voice.

His body was back to normal for now.

His voice had just about recovered.

However, Zhang Ye was still undecided on what songs to sing, and with the second episode's recording of King of Masked Singers coming up, he was starting to panic, too. Everyone knew that he was someone who always set very high standards for himself, so he would be much more stringent when it came to choosing a song. He couldn't even be a little unsatisfied with it.

Which songs should he choose?

He had absolutely no idea whatsoever!

Reuse the song he had rehearsed before he switched songs last time? No good!

Or should he bring out a classic?

...

At this moment, a heated discussion erupted online!

"It will be Saturday in another two days!"

"They'll be recording tomorrow, right?"

"I'm so looking forward to it!"

"King of Masked Singers is so good!"

"I love The Clown the most!"

"Who do you guys think will be crowned as the second episode's Masked King?"

"Petal Shower!"

"Sunset Glow sang really well too! It's just that a lot of the audience members could not understand!"

"It's definitely going to be Sunflower, without a doubt!"

"Eh, why didn't anyone mention The Clown?"

"He's already been crowned as the first episode's Masked King.

And besides, everyone knows that his crowning was not exactly well-deserved. He only got it because he was being opportunistic."

"Ah, what do you mean by that?"

"Can't you tell? For someone as sick as him, everyone would surely pity him. A lot of people voted for him out of sympathy. Didn't any of you realize that? The Clown's singing and voice were totally appalling, even though he was really suffering from a cold too, which we won't talk about. His technique actually laid in his lyrics, claiming he was some wolf from the north looking for some beautiful plains, or how he's a beautiful, beautiful wild rose but for the unfair heavens. He only won on the technicalities of his song lyrics which he used to apply to his circumstances at that moment. It's no surprise that he won the vote to become Masked King. But he definitely has no chance in the second episode."

"Finally! There's someone else who noticed it! I also noticed it!"

"Yeah, those two songs by The Clown were good, and I wondered who wrote them too, but I can't help but feel that it wasn't a proper victory. He only did it by gaining pity points!"

"Is that so? I thought it was quite a proper win."

"That's because you're still too young to understand."

"That's quite true, to be honest. You can even say that The Clown's performance that day was the worst of the six participants, but his lyrics were good and he totally took advantage of that. If he really were to sing another song, even if he didn't have a cold and his voice was in the best possible shape, he still couldn't compare to Petal Shower and Sunflower. He probably wouldn't even last in a competition against Sunset Glow and The Yak!"

"Um, that's what I think too."

"There are two possibilities now. One is that The Clown's voice has not recovered yet and he'll continue playing the sympathy card

but the audience does not get convinced. That would mean he is almost guaranteed to get eliminated. The second is that The Clown's voice has recovered and he performs to his best. But without the sympathy card, how many people will actually like his songs and singing? Rather than talking about his chances of becoming the second episode's Masked King, I think The Clown will find it hard to even stay in the competition."

On the Top Chinese Music Chart.

"Wild Rose" was already sweeping aside every other song on the charts.

#1 on the daily chart!

#1 on the weekly chart!

#3 on the monthly chart, but already making its way up to first place!

The performance of "Wolf" was quite good and did well on the charts too.

But what was surprising was that in the official poll created by Beijing Television's King of Masked Singers program team, the support for The Clown was dipping.

First: Petal Shower.

Second: Sunflower in the Starlight.

Third: Sunset Glow.

The Clown was ranked fourth.

Followed by the eliminated King of Oddity, who wasn't too far behind The Clown.

A lot of people had been affected by the discussions, or rather a lot of them had the same opinions regarding The Clown and felt that he had won the first episode only because he got lucky.

Some negative news also sprung up after that.

"How far can The Clown go just by relying on sympathy?"

"Sources claim that replacement masked singers on the King of Masked Singers' second episode will include a talented singer!"

"The Clown facing elimination?"

"Wild Rose sweeps the charts, The Clown sweeps the floor!"

"A singing competition or a songwriting competition?"

"Playing the sympathy card on King of Masked Singers gets called out by netizens!"

"The Clown: A flash in the pan?"

"The Clown revealed: Might be an unknown rookie!"

When a person gets popular, gossip will fly.

With the King of Masked Singers so popular now, it was difficult to avoid the doubting voices. But these doubting voices from the media and people regarding The Clown was something that was still rarely seen. In the era of speculation, lies, and sympathy cards, people were getting even more sensitive to it. Together with people fanning the flames behind these claims, everyone started believing it the more they heard them. They thought that it was rather true, since if it weren't for those lyrical verses that resonated with everyone's emotions at that time and gained their sympathy, who would have actually cast their vote for him? Perhaps the King of Masked Singers' program team also had such thoughts. Frankly, a lot of people did not even bother listening to The Clown's voice or heard anything special in his voice. Everyone was purely moved just by the lyrics of those two songs.

"I just dislike people who try to gain sympathy this way!"

"Yeah, it's so disgusting to watch!"

"Didn't he just get those good songs because of his company? It's not like he really has the talent to win!"

The opinions were getting more and more skewed!

...

Zhang Ye found out about this news and these opinions the night before the recording was about to take place.

Depending on lyrics?

Trying to gain sympathy?

He just smiled and did not get bothered by it.

He settled his mind then continued to select songs.

Chapter 1005: The Clown's two songs!

Friday.

At around 8 in the morning.

Near the side door of Beijing Television's main building, Han Qi was standing alone at a spot she felt would not be eye-catching. She looked around from time to time and seemed to be waiting for someone.

Not too far away, Xiao Lu and Dafei were chatting and laughing as they walked over.

"Eh, Little Han?" Xiao Lu was surprised to see her here.

Han Qi smiled and said, "Sister Lu, Brother Fei, good morning."

Dafei wondered, "What are you doing here?"

Han Qi blushed and said, "I-I'm waiting for Teacher Clown."

Dafei asked, "The Clown's rehearsal is scheduled for 9 AM, right?"

Han Qi nodded. "Yes."

Xiao Lu smiled and said, "Then you better hurry. The other singers finished rehearsing yesterday except for Teacher Clown." Her smile then withdrew and she said with melancholy, "The public opinion during the past two days hasn't favored him much. A lot of people are already doubting The Clown for not winning the competition properly, saying he relied on the lyrics to remedy his situation and even chastised him for trying to gain pity points. We will start recording the show in the afternoon. When he takes the stage later, he'll definitely face a great deal of pressure and the audience will probably be affected by public opinion during the voting."

Han Qi said angrily, "What do they mean 'relying on lyrics'? They don't know a thing!"

"Just be a bit more attentive in regards to that. Also, the condition of Teacher Clown's voice is another problem, so follow up with him on that." Then Xiao Lu and Dafei went into the main building.

Han Qi was left feeling both angry and worried.

It was really infuriating!

What would those media people know!

What would those netizens know!

How could they criticize Teacher Clown?

Han Qi continued to look around as she waited for her target. She was here to "intercept" The Clown today. He had always been either appearing at the station or in front of her without getting noticed every single time, so Han Qi decided that she would just come out to the entrance to wait for him. She really wanted to know who the man behind The Clown's mask was. She was confident that with her past interactions with him, if The Clown stood in front of her, she would be able to recognize him as quite a few of The Clown's distinct traits came to her mind.

Celebrity.

Professional singer.

Charming.

Short haired.

Around 30 years of age?

In front of her, a celebrity and two of his assistants were walking over.

Han Qi immediately locked her eyes on him. No, not him. This man was invited to come for an interview today. Eh, another person was coming, but it wasn't him either. He was a host at Beijing Television.

In the end, she did not manage to spot The Clown, but instead saw her idol.

In the parking lot, Zhang Ye got out of his car and walked straight toward the building.

On his way over, there were quite a few people who greeted him.

"Aiya, Teacher Zhang!"

"Hello, Teacher Zhang."

"Good morning, Teacher Zhang."

"Good morning, Director Zhang."

Not only the King of Masked Singers' program team, even the other departments and program teams' staff who saw Zhang Ye were friendly to him. The King of Masked Singers that Zhang Ye produced had allowed Beijing Television to achieve the top spot in the nationwide viewership ratings of television shows for the first time ever. Even if they were not staff from the King of Masked Singers' program team, they still felt extremely excited. Due to the domino effect, the other program teams experienced a slight viewership increase for their shows. This proved that the King of Masked Singers was leading Beijing Television to move onto a bigger stage and journey to becoming a leading provincial satellite station. Naturally, a lot of the Beijing Television staff were willing to recognize Zhang Ye's merits because everyone knew that if it were not for Zhang Ye's contributions, even with the skill of all the program teams in Beijing Television combined, it was impossible that they could come up with a show that performed so outstandingly.

Zhang Ye smiled and nodded at them.

He arrived at the entrance in the blink of an eye.

Han Qi was already extremely nervous. She straightened instantly and mustered up her courage to greet him. She did not have any expectations that Zhang Ye would reply to her. "Teacher

Zhang, good morning!"

When Zhang Ye heard that, he was surprised for a moment. Only then did he see Han Qi, to whom he smiled and said, "Morning to you as well." Then he went upstairs without saying anything else.

But Han Qi got very excited!

Teacher Zhang spoke to me! He spoke to me!

She was truly a diehard Zhang Ye fan and was the type who would argue with anyone if they said bad things about him online. She was in a very terrible mood today due to Teacher Clown's situation, but when Zhang Ye greeted her with a "morning to you as well," her mood immediately improved and she became much more spirited!

So she continued waiting.

Why hadn't Teacher Clown arrived yet?

10 minutes.

20 minutes.

30 minutes.

It was almost 9 AM and time for the scheduled rehearsal, but The Clown was still not here yet.

Han Qi quickly called The Clown, but no one answered the phone. As such, she had no choice but to call to Music Director Bai Yuanfei. She anxiously said: "Teacher Bai, Teacher Clown has not arrived yet, and as he might not be feeling too well, do you think we can arrange something regarding the rehearsal...."

On the other end of the line.

Bai Yuanfei said in surprise: "The Clown? But he's already here, isn't he?"

Han Qi exclaimed: "Ah?"

Bai Yuanfei said: "We're already rehearsing."

He already arrived?

What the hell!

When did you even arrive?

Don't tell me you can teleport?

Han Qi nearly fainted as her attempt to intercept The Clown ended in vain. The Clown was simply too mysterious. Could it be that he had entered from the back door or through the cafeteria's stairway entrance? Why are you doing things so randomly! Han Qi's curiosity almost exploded. Like a lot of the viewers in the country, she really wanted to know who The Clown was! Why wouldn't he show his face? Why did he have to hide his identity so carefully? Was there any reason why he couldn't show his face? That not even the program team staff could know about it? Uh, could it be that he was very, very...ugly?

She immediately set herself thinking.

Who were the ugly celebrities in the entertainment industry?

Crosstalk comedian Tang Dazhang?

Korea's Lee Anson?

Or those athletes from the sporting world?

Whatever it was, in Han Qi's eyes, those who had scolded Zhang Ye were all ugly.

See, this is what you call a diehard fan!

...

In the rehearsal room.

This was a rather big set allocated to them by Beijing Television. Other than musical instruments, there were cameras set up around the place. Some rehearsal scenes would probably end up being edited and broadcast in the episode. The entire time after the masked singers arrived at Beijing Television would be fully

recorded, unless the contestants personally requested for them not to do so. For example, not placing any cameras in the waiting room. If that happened, the program team would respect the singers' wishes like what The Clown had just done.

By the time Han Qi came over, The Clown had indeed already arrived.

Music Director Bai Yuanfei said, "Let's rehearse once more."

The Miracle Wheels nodded.

The house band lineup for today was magnificent, with about eight old folk music teachers invited as well.

Han Qi did not go over to disturb them. She just found a seat in the audience and listened attentively.

The music started playing.

The band members looked at the score given to them by The Clown and started playing the accompaniment.

The Clown was wearing his mask and standing on stage, humming softly along with the music. "Hmm, mmm, hmmm..." He practiced his song by humming in a nasally voice the entire process.

Han Qi's heart skipped a beat.

Shit!

The teacher's voice had not recovered yet!

They finally finished with the rehearsal of the first song after a long very time.

The Clown said, "Thanks for helping me, teachers."

Han Qi was surprised. Eh, listening to Teacher Clown's speak, he sounded like he was in better shape than last week. He even spoke with his disguised voice? He was purposely hiding his voice? Or was it because his voice had not fully recovered yet?

Bai Yuanfei said worriedly, "Is everything gonna be fine?"

The Clown nodded. "The song is a bit difficult, so I can't do a proper practice run."

The band guitarist asked, "Was it because of the side effects from the cortisone shot? You really risked your life. With three shots, even the gods would not be able to bear with it!"

The drummer sighed while shaking his head.

The Clown said, "That's why I have to save my voice for the actual performance."

"Alright." Bai Yuanfei said, "We'll rehearse this way for now. You don't have to sing; it's fine to just hum along. Try your best to maintain your stamina. Let's start with the rehearsal of the second song!"

However, the second song went beyond their expectations as they spent almost two hours before just barely getting through the rehearsal. Every one of the band members were extremely tired from it.

What song was this?

Why was it so complex?

Was this even necessary?

Could it be that his voice was unable to recover in time, so he decided to use the accompaniment to make up for it? Using the music's charm to cover his mistakes?

Hai. The band members no longer held much hope for The Clown in this round of the competition!

Chapter 1006: The Clown vs. Petal Shower!

Later that afternoon.

The recording was about to begin.

Backstage, the contestants started to draw lots to decide the order of their appearances and opponents in the first round. There were two replacement masked singers here, whose names and strength were unknown. As such, everyone placed a great deal of importance on this draw due to their results being affected by who their opponent was and in which order they would appear onstage. This was in direct relation to whether they could still remain on this stage or if they would advance further.

In The Clown's waiting room.

The door opened.

Han Qi and some of the program team staff came in.

"Teacher, it's your turn," Han Qi said nervously. She was hoping that The Clown would draw a good lot, the best being number six and would mean that he would be the last to sing.

The Clown reached his hand into the box.

The camera focused onto him immediately.

At the same time, the other contestants could clearly observe the ongoing at The Clown's waiting room in real time Sunflower in the Starlight had drawn number three.

Petal Shower was number one.

New replacement masked singer "God of War" had drawn number four.

These were the results of the draw so far: Sunflower's opponent was to be God of War. During the drawing process that was shown live from God of War's waiting room earlier, all the other contestants saw how God of War practically broke down. At first,

the man's voice sounded rather cheerful, but he ended up exclaiming "no, no, no" for the longest time after the draw. This was because anyone who had watched the first episode of King of Masked Singers would know exactly how strong an opponent Sunflower was. One was Sunflower, the other was Petal Shower. They were both opponents that no one wanted to be matched against!

It was now The Clown's turn for the draw. Everyone was glued to their TV.

The Clown's hand withdrew from the box, holding a small ball in his hand. The numbered side of it was then turned to the camera.

Number two!

He had drawn number two!

He would be the second one to appear on stage and his opponent was—Petal Shower.

Han Qi similarly broke down as well. No! No! No!

He would be appearing at the beginning and his opponent was going to be Petal Shower. This was the worst lot that could be drawn!

In the waiting room of the other replacement masked singer who had not drawn lots yet, he let out a long sigh of relief after seeing The Clown get matched with Petal Shower. That would mean that Sunset Glow had been confirmed as his opponent. Petal Shower was currently the contestant with the most popularity in the prediction poll on the official website. Hundreds of thousands of people had voted that she would be crowned the second episode's Masked King, with Sunflower in second place with 110,000 votes. This was the reason why no one was willing to face off against these two in the first round; they had already gained a good standing in popularity. Even if they made some mistakes and did not perform up to their potential, the live audience voters might still cast their

votes for them as there would be emotion involved in their decision. Competitions have always declared themselves to be fair, but how could there possibly be absolute fairness?

The door closed.

The program team staff left the waiting room.

Han Qi said in panic, "What should we do now!"

But The Clown did not say a single word. Petal Shower was indeed a strong opponent, and he honestly did not wish to face her for his first song today, yet this was exactly what happened.

The studio issued an announcement to start the countdown to recording.

Han Qi was in despair.

Petal Shower enjoyed a very good reputation while The Clown was attracting doubt from too many people!

They could not win this!

There was no way they could win!

When the house band and the program team staff found out about this matchup, they pitied The Clown. They knew there was no chance he could fight for the throne of the Masked King now and thought that he should be thinking of how to remain in the competition instead.

...

The studio was packed.

The audience gazed at the stage in excitement as recording began!

After Dong Shanshan took the stage and recited a string of advertising messages, she smiled at the guessing panel. "Judges, after the first episode, do you have any guesses on who the contestants are?"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "I have no idea who's who."

Amy giggled and said, "Even at the moment when King of Oddity took off his mask, I still could not believe it. With the costumes wrapping them up so tightly and wearing a mask, who could guess who they are? But Sunset Glow's voice sounds a little familiar to me, so I'll just continue observing for now."

Backstage, Sunset Glow was watching the television. When she heard that, she raised a half-smile.

This is not good.

Did Amy really recognize me?

I've already deliberately changed the tone of my vocal register.

Chen Guang laughed and said, "I'll observe a bit more today."

Dong Shanshan asked, "Judges, are there any contestants you have a good feeling about?"

Wang Zhuishu smiled and said, "I still have my money on Petal Shower."

Chen Yidong said, "I think Sunflower is good. He has a great chance of becoming the Masked King today."

Chen Guang added, "If we're talking about singing, Sunflower and Petal Shower really do have the greater chance of becoming the Masked King. But this is a competition after all, so it's hard to tell."

Zhang Xia nodded. "Petal Shower is very good. I feel like I definitely know her."

Yao Jiancai looked at Chen Guang and joked, "Old Chen, could your wife have come to join the competition?"

Chen Guang's eyes twitched as he replied hurriedly with a smile, "I still believe that Petal Shower is Sister Zhang."

Amy laughed. "That's possible too!"

Everyone was making wild guesses. In truth, a lot of people really

weren't thinking about the contestants as any of those famous big names in the music industry. They were all still confused.

After the atmosphere warmed up, the competition got underway. The audience was also getting more and more excited.

"Hurry up!"

"Petal Shower! Petal Shower!"

"I wonder what kind of song Sunflower will sing today. I like him so much!"

"Eh, why didn't any of the judges mention The Clown?"

"I guess the program team must have informed them before the recording started."

"Yeah, the voices of doubts are getting stronger and they're all about the validity of The Clown winning Masked King on the last episode. No one really dares to bring up how he went onstage sick and could still sing in that way anymore. The judges probably know it themselves too that they were only moved by The Clown's songs last week out of sympathy due to how the lyrics were befitting of the circumstances. Didn't Grandma Zhang Xia and Chen Guang also say that if it were really down to singing technique, other than the two replacements today, the best would definitely be either Petal Shower or Sunflower?"

"The Clown was indeed just being opportunistic."

"The first episode's Masked King should have been Sunflower."

"Oh come on, it should have been Sunset Glow."

"Hur hur."

"Let's see how it goes this episode then!"

"Eh, it's starting!"

People in the audience were debating endlessly about their favorite singer or who they supported. However, The Clown's

name was starting to get mentioned less and less.

Dong Shanshan's voice reverberated through the studio. "Let us welcome our first performer today—Petal Shower."

Immediate applause rang out!

"Wow!"

"She's the first one to perform!"

"Petal Shower, I love you!"

"This is great! The first one to sing is our Petal Shower!"

Quite a few people were shouting and screaming, raising the intensity in the studio!

During the first episode when the contestants were underneath masks and had yet to sing a song, people had no idea how good they were. When the contestants first appeared on stage, the applause was lukewarm at best. However, this time was different as everyone had watched the show once. In fact, there were even some people in the audience who were attending the recording for the second time. The atmosphere was clearly different than last time.

Under everyone's attention, Petal Shower walked onstage.

Applause thundered once again!

"You got this!"

"Come on!"

"You're the true Masked King!"

Just from this reaction alone, it could be obvious how popular Petal Shower was!

Even the program team staff and the other contestants who were backstage and slated to appear later could only smile wryly to themselves. She was already this popular after singing just two songs in the first episode?

How could they still compete with her?

They should just crown her Masked King straight away!

However, they were willing to admit that Petal Shower was indeed a strong foe. Thinking of this, all the other masked singers felt some sympathy for The Clown for having drawn today's worst lot!

The lights dimmed.

The bowed notes of a violin floated through the air.

The audience hushed, with some of them closing their eyes to listen.

Petal Shower gripped the microphone and opened her mouth softly.

A gentle falsetto drifted out!

It was her signature technique on this stage, as well as the audience's familiar sense of shock!

"Lies repeated a hundred times.

"In return, just a false promise.

"A mask that's been worn a lifetime.

"Why can't I become the person I want to be?"

The audience knew from the moment they heard it!

This was "Face"!

It was a very slow and touching song!

Amy forced a smile and said, "How nice. She's singing it better than me!"

Zhang Xia looked at her. "It's not like you to sing endearing songs in the first place."

Amy said to convince her, "There's almost no one in the music industry who can sing like this. The range of her falsetto is

enormous, so I'm a 100% sure that Petal Shower is a professional singer. She's most definitely a big name too!"

Wang Zhuishu agreed, "That's right. And I have a feeling that this woman must be such a big name in the music industry that we couldn't even start imagining it. But as long as she doesn't speak with her normal voice, there's no way that we can guess who she is!"

Yao Jiancai was enjoying the singing. "Whoever faces her is really down on their luck."

Chen Yidong said, "As long as Petal Shower does not make any mistakes, it'll be difficult for anyone to beat her. Her falsetto is so amazing that I don't think there's anyone who has a better technique than hers!"

Petal Shower sang a cappella.

"Ugly.

"A pretence.

"This is...

"What my face...is."

The performance ended.

Petal Shower lowered her microphone and took a slight bow in thanks.

Applause immediately rang out!

Even the backstage contestants were clapping for her!

The audience was screaming from every corner!

"It's so good!"

"I used to not like this song, but Petal Shower sang it really well!"

"That's what a charming singer can do!"

"She's definitely going to win!"

"Yeah, there's no need to listen to the next contestant!"

"Right, it doesn't matter who comes next!"

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

Petal Shower's performance today was as good as her last one. There were no mistakes and no voice cracking, although it wasn't as stunning as her first performance in the last episode. Perhaps this was due to the choice and genre of the song, but she still managed to perform it up to her level and it was still as enjoyable to listen to! But the most crucial point was that the entire song was sung with a varied falsetto, which further increased the charm of the song. After all, none of them had ever heard of anyone who would dare to sing like this. Due to it being very difficult to sing in falsetto, not too many singers had the capability to do so, nor would they dare to do something like this live! Due to such curiosity, this rendition of "Face" by Petal Shower had once again infected the studio!

Whether it was the audience?

The judges?

The backstage contestants?

Or the program team staff?

None of them felt that she could lose!

Chapter 1007: A song without lyrics!

The studio was filled with the sound of applause.

The first song had raised the atmosphere to the highest point. None of the other participating singers hoped that they would be the next to appear, but The Clown was already standing at the door.

Han Qi gave a bitter smile. "Teacher."

The Clown grunted in acknowledgment.

Han Qi hesitated, then said, "Let's aim for the next song instead and focus on that. Don't try so hard on this song and preserve some of your stamina for later. After all, your voice has only recovered a little and you still can't perform to the best of your ability. We just need to ensure that you don't get eliminated."

The Clown smiled but did not speak.

Dafei came over. "It's your turn soon."

The Clown nodded.

Executive Director Hu Fei took some time to go over. He was worried about The Clown's voice and even more worried that the recent public opinion would strike a blow to him. "How do you feel?"

The Clown said, "Great."

Hu Fei sighed. "Ignore what the media is saying."

The Clown said, "Alright."

Hu Fei said, "Ignore them and don't let it get to you. Just sing the best that you can."

The Clown shook his head. "I don't mind what they're saying on the Internet and news."

"Right, just sing as you would usually sing. Your lyrics are your

greatest weapon, so you can't just toss them aside. It's also a part of your strength," Hu Fei comforted.

The Clown smiled and said, "I do understand that."

When the program team staff heard this, they felt relieved.

He was indeed worthy of being someone from the entertainment circle as his mental fortitude seemed to be much stronger than most people. Even with so much pressure stemming from the public, he was able to easily brush it aside. This was something that most other people could do!

Good on you, Teacher Clown!

Don't let the gossip get to you!

Even if you lose today, no one will take you lightly!

From the stage, Dong Shanshan filtered in. "Then, let's welcome our next contestant—The Clown!"

The Clown exhaled, took a step, and walked out onto the stage at his own pace.

Han Qi felt a heavy sense of frustration as she watched The Clown walk off toward the stage. He was doomed even before he could take the stage or utter any lyrics. This feeling deflated her!

The audience was stunned!

Right now, many people were watching in shock as The Clown slowly walked onto the stage.

"What?"

"The next one up is The Clown?"

"Damn, why is it him?"

"Can he get any more unlucky than that?"

"Yeah, if it were any other opponent, The Clown might still somehow advance to the next round, especially if it was either of those two replacement masked singers since no one knows how

well they can sing yet. But now that his opponent is Petal Shower, what competition is left? His voice has not recovered yet, right? Even if he were to bring out another two sensational songs, or if his company wrote him another two songs with lyrics that could move the Heavens, it's not likely that anyone would get convinced like last time."

"This round really boils down to their skills."

"It's no use even if The Clown's voice has recovered!"

"I really do like his lyrics, though. I was here for the last episode's recording and gave him my vote at that time, but if I were to disregard the meaning behind the lyrics, I doubt that The Clown could even clinch third place!"

"He's even being called out in the media right now."

"The previous Masked King should not have been him."

The audience was pointing at the stage and making lots of noise.

However, Zhang Ye was seemingly unaware of the situation. He quietly walked to center stage and closed his eyes as though he did not hear anything. He had witnessed this sort of spectacle too many times before, so much that he could not even count the number of times it had happened.

Chen Guang looked at him and sighed.

Zhang Xia said, "Things are very disadvantageous for The Clown."

The pressure from public opinion was too great and was practically the death sentence for The Clown.

The lights dimmed.

This was the signal that the next performance was about to begin.

Petal Shower did not return to her waiting room. She watched him from the wings.

Backstage, Sunset Glow, Sunflower, God of War, and the other contestants were also watching TVs without blinking. They were actually rather curious about what song The Clown would be singing today.

The music started.

The notes of a piano played.

But it wasn't Zhang Ye playing the piano today, because this song was too difficult and Zhang Ye would not be able to concentrate on playing and singing simultaneously. Even during the rehearsals, he did not practice the singing as he was afraid that his voice would be unable to hold up—yes, he was really going to challenge such a difficult song today!

The title of the song was displayed on the teleprompter overhead the stage.

Opera, Dedicated to Love.

The judges blinked.

The audience could not understand either.

Opera?

What is this?

Never heard of it. Are you going to sing another original? Do you intend to win us over with your lyrics again?

All of a sudden, right as the piano played the melody, The Clown opened his mouth.

"Oooooooooo.

"Aaaah, uaaaaahh.

"Aaaaaah, oooh, aaaah."

The judges were shocked!

The audience was shocked!

The other contestants were also shocked!

When these vocals came out, a lot of people could feel themselves getting the goosebumps!

It was falsetto!

The Clown was actually singing in falsetto too!

Holy shit! Did The Clown actually intend to compete against Petal Shower through the falsetto?

No way! There was absolutely no way! He would definitely just be singing in falsetto for the first two verses before switching back to his normal voice!

Petal Shower looked up to the stage at The Clown in surprise and could not react!

"Aaaaahhh.

"Aaah, ahhhh.

"Aaaaaaahh, ahhh, ahhh."

There were no signs of his normal voice at all!

It was all in falsetto!

The audience was dumbfounded from listening to this!

Zhang Xia was also dumbfounded. "This, this singing, this falsetto..."

Amy squealed, "How is this possible!"

Wang Zhuishu was also dumbfounded!

Chen Guang was dumbfounded too!

Right after Petal Shower finished performing, some people were saying that there wouldn't be another person who could sing in falsetto the way she did. But just a few minutes later, a great slap was buffeted across their faces with a loud smack!

Another person had appeared!

And it was even a person who could also wield his falsetto technique in such a superb manner!

The best aspect of Petal Shower's varying falsetto range was its exquisiteness!

But The Clown's falsetto was better in terms of vocal weight. It won in terms of carrying power and emotion and carved into everyone's hearts like a sharp knife. It left everyone unprepared for the shock they were receiving!

What was going on?

Just what was happening?

Han Qi and the program team staff were in similar states of disbelief!

No one had expected that The Clown would sing this way, nor could they have expected that he had such a good falsetto! This was terrifying! This singing technique was simply terrifying!

Zhang Ye continued singing.

"Aaaaaaaaah.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.

"Ahhhhh, ahh."

All of a sudden, he raised the pitch of his falsetto so high that it felt like it had pierced through the roof!

Hearing this, the audience found it hard to hold their feelings in any longer!

"Oh my god!"

"This, this..."

"Can it get any more amazing than this?"

"Heavens!"

"What about the lyrics?"

"Where are the lyrics?"

"Yeah, why are there no lyrics? How can there be no lyrics?"

Zhang Ye was still singing.

"Aah, aaaaah.

"Ahh, ahhhhhh.

"Aaaaaaaaah, ahhhh.

"Ahhh, ahhh."

There was only one "ah" word on the teleprompter!

The audience was once again shocked by The Clown's choice of song!

There were no lyrics!

This was a fucking song without any lyrics!

The house band musicians were dumbstruck!

Music Director Bai Yuanfei looked like he was at a total loss for words!

They finally knew why The Clown had not opened his mouth to sing during the rehearsal. They finally knew why The Clown only hummed through the song when rehearsing. It was because this fucking song had no lyrics in the first place!

Was there even a song like that? Could a song...really have no lyrics? There wasn't any sort of a song in this world, not a single one. But in Zhang Ye's previous world, this song titled "Opera, Dedicated to Love" truly did not have any lyrics. The original version was performed by famous Russian singer, [Vitas](#), and was simply known as "[Opera](#)." Later, it was covered by [Terry Lin](#) on the music show I Am a Singer. His performance shocked the entire audience and he got a very good result!

And today, Zhang Ye had brought this famous song from his previous world and presented it here on this stage!

It did not just shock the audience!

It terrified everyone in the audience!

Because no one in this world had ever before heard a song with no lyrics!

Everyone knew current public opinion basically doubted The Clown's win in the first episode, saying he used the meaning of his lyrics to win and that it was not a proper victory!

But today, The Clown had come onstage once more and actually sang an entire song with no lyrics. This was clearly a response to those people—this was clearly a face smacking!

And it was even a very harsh slap!

His singing was simply amazing!

There were no lyrics in it whatsoever, but why? How could this singing floating through the studio stir up image after image in their minds?

Why?

Why did they get the goosebumps from listening to his singing?

The audience was terribly shocked!

Especially when The Clown suddenly paused, then continued singing in a falsetto that increased in pitch for a good five to six seconds, even incorporating some portamento!

With that, many in the audience could not longer hold it in and started to stand up while screaming!

They were going crazy!

The audience had gone crazy!

Meanwhile, Hu Fei nearly passed out onto the floor!

Before The Clown went out on stage, Hu Fei tried to comfort him as he was afraid The Clown would be affected negatively by public opinion on how he had used lyrics to win. The Clown's response to

Hu Fei and the program team was still very fresh in their minds.
He had stated very firmly that he did not mind it at all.

Everyone who heard him say that had believed him at the time!

But now, the program team staff nearly vomited blood!

Didn't mind?

Didn't mind, your sister, fuck!

You minded it a whole fucking lot, alright!?

Chapter 1008: Who on earth is this!

There were two versions of this song that Zhang Ye was familiar with.

One of them was the original sung by [Vitas](#).

The other was by [Terry Lin](#), who made some changes to it.

These two singers had a very wide falsetto range, although their singing styles were completely different.

Today, Zhang Ye did not imitate either of their versions. This was because, similar to the differences between those two, Zhang Ye's falsetto was different from Vitas's and Terry Lin's. If he had purposely imitated their style, he would only be at a disadvantage and cause this song to lose its essence. Therefore, Zhang Ye also adapted it to suit himself and used his own style to interpret this song. His falsetto voice was even firmer and more carrying than Terry Lin's and Vitas's techniques, so he tightened the control of his high notes so that they would not sound too breathy. But he had to push his falsetto out and let it soar to the skies!

This song was too difficult!

Even for Zhang Ye, he had to expend all of his energy just to fully concentrate and focus on the singing. As a result, he had his eyes closed for the duration of his performance without even looking at the judges or audience once.

"Aaah, aaah, aaah, ahhhhh.

"Ahhhhhhh, ahhhhhhh.

"Ahhhh, aaaaaahhhh.

"Ahh, ahhhhhhh."

He did not look at anyone.

But everyone was watching him in utter shock!

Zhang Xia saw an image of a dancer dancing and their sweat dripping on a stage that was within a grand and majestic palace.

Amy also pictured an image. It was a forlorn, empty alleyway without any signs of people other than a person injured all over whose clothes were stained with fresh blood. That person had thrust their chest out and was gazing up at the moon and singing.

In the audience.

A female audience member felt like she was in an endless expanse of greenery, not knowing where to go or which direction to head toward. All of a sudden, singing drifted towards her from afar. She started running with all her might toward it. As she ran and ran, she saw her late mother waving at her while smiling and calling for her to return home. She suddenly started to cry and couldn't stop!

The Clown's singing felt like it was saying something. It felt like it was stirring up all kinds of emotions about love onto this stage!

Dedicated to Love.

This was exactly what the song was about.

It was as though he was telling everyone that even if they were scolding him or if he didn't have an audience, he would still give his all and dedicate himself to the stage!

"Ahhhhhhh, ahh.

"Ahhhhhhh, aaaah.

"Ahhhh, ahhhhhhh.

"Aaaaaahhhh, ahhh."

All kinds of images were conjured up in the minds of many of the audience members!

Han Qi saw it!

Hu Fei saw it!

Yao Jiancai saw it!

Petal Shower saw it!

Sunflower saw it!

Sunset Glow saw it!

The audience also saw it!

So they were shocked! So they were moved!

There were no lyrics!

Not a single verse!

However, even though this song had no words, it felt like it said thousands of words. In fact, it conveyed more than what thousand of words could say!

Several of the judges suddenly recalled the criticism in the news and online. They were suddenly very angered and felt that it was extremely insulting! Would a singer who could sing such a song need to rely on using lyrics to gain sympathy?

How could that be!

How could that be possible!

So what if there weren't any lyrics?

He could still shine in radiant splendor!

That was the charm of music!

That was this singer's charm!

...

Backstage.

In Sunflower in the Starlight's waiting room.

Sunflower watched the television and did not say a word.

...

In Sunset Glow's waiting room.

Sunset Glow abruptly turned to the side and gave a wry smile to

the camera inside the room. "If he makes it to the next round, I wouldn't want to face him."

...

In God of War's waiting room.

God of War looked helpless.

What sort of people were these!

Who the fuck was this group of freaks!

...

In the studio.

The music stopped.

In the middle of The Clown's a cappella falsetto, he ended the song amid sorrow and love. He sustained the falsetto for a very long time and in a very high pitch. As it came to the end, it got lower and softer until there was no sound.

Silence.

It was so silent it was scary.

It wasn't until The Clown raised his head and bowed in thanks that the audience knew the performance had ended!

Applause then seemingly thundered with a sudden explosion!

The audience was shouting his name in a frenzy!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

This was a song that could move people!

This was an unprecedented song!

Other than shouting, they could not find another way to express

their emotions!

Dong Shanshan came onstage. "Let's invite our previous singer, Petal Shower."

Petal Shower walked slowly up onto the stage and nodded at The Clown. Her eyes were locked on him as though she were hoping to discover a clue to find out who he was!

The Clown nodded back at her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Will the panel of judges—"

"I don't know how to describe what I'm feeling right now! The Clown, you're so wonderful!" Amy did not wait and stood up before Shanshan could finish speaking.

The Clown gave a slight bow and said, "Thank you, Teacher Amy."

Amy quickly waved it off and said, "Don't you call me that. I don't deserve to be addressed as a teacher in front of you."

Wang Zhuishu was completely convinced. "He definitely has to be a big shot in the industry! There's no doubt!"

The Clown smiled but did not respond.

Dong Shanshan said, "Oh, Teacher Wang, who do you think he is?"

Wang Zhuishu said dejectedly, "The problem is I don't really know who this big shot is! I don't even have a potential candidate in mind!"

Chen Yidong said, "When he sang 'Wolf' and 'Wild Rose' in the last episode, he was in very bad shape and had lost his voice. Still, he managed to sing those songs in such an astonishing way. At that time, I was already wondering how good this guy's singing would be if his voice had recovered. I finally heard it today! He's really amazing! Seriously...you've really shocked me today!"

The Clown's voice came from underneath the mask and went

through the voice transforming microphone. "Thank you."

Zhang Xia suddenly said, "But there's no such person in the music industry!"

The judges looked to Zhang Xia.

Zhang Xia analyzed, "Petal Shower sang her female falsetto to a perfection. Although I can't guess who she is because she did not reveal any of her real voice, I at least have some candidates in mind and it's possible to make a guess. However, I really can't guess who The Clown is. I've been in the music industry for a few decades now, yet I've never heard of any male singers who could sing in falsetto like this. There just isn't anyone I can think of. So I guess, yeah, I can only guess that this man is probably not part of the music industry."

Yao Jiancai said in surprise, "You mean to say that The Clown is not a professional singer?"

Amy instantly shook her head. "That's impossible. Can an amateur singer sing that well? If so, then professional singers would die out." This was how she was. She wasn't afraid to use whatever descriptions she liked.

Zhang Xia said, "I can only guess."

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Just who are you!"

The Clown smiled without saying a word.

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Can you tell us your age? Let's narrow down the range of our target."

Dong Shanshan quickly stopped the discussion. She smiled and said, "Teacher Wang, the contestant will not be answering any questions that are too specific. You must rely upon your own guesses."

Chen Guang spoke up, "Then can I ask a not so straightforward question?"

Dong Shanshan nodded.

Chen Guang thought for a moment, then suddenly asked, "Are you above or below the B-list?"

The audience was immediately energized!

The judges felt that this was a very good question and pricked up their ears.

As Dong Shanshan was not sure if this question was acceptable, she quickly communicated with the program team staff through her earpiece.

However, The Clown was already answering the question.

The Clown said calmly, "Above."

The entire studio flew into an uproar!

At least a B-list celebrity?

In other words, he was at least a B-lister?

Petal Shower looked at him with interest!

Chen Guang was dumbfounded!

Zhang Xia gasped!

The masked singers backstage were also extremely shocked!

They thought that King of Oddity, who had been eliminated last episode, was a big name since he was a C-lister. But who could have expected that The Clown, who hadn't been recognized by anyone and even thought by some to be a newcomer, would turn out to be an even bigger name, at least a B-list celebrity! Everyone was stunned by this revelation!

The audience was making a ruckus!

"Who is it!"

"At least a B-lister? There's over several dozen possibilities!"

"But the range isn't that large either!"

"Holy shit!"

"Is he really a B-lister?"

"He might even be an A-lister?"

"Heavens! He's that much of a big name?"

Dong Shanshan was stunned too. Clearly, she did not expect this either!

Amy instantly got excited. "Above the B-list—that's a very small range of possibilities. S-So why can't I guess who you are!"

The Clown smiled. He thought to himself that of course they couldn't guess who he was.

Yao Jiancai gave Chen Guang a look. "Are you Chen Guang's twin brother? And the one onstage is the real Old Chen? You guys are just teasing us, aren't you?"

Chen Guang didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "I'm an only child, Brother Yao."

Zhang Xia said, "Besides you, who else can sing as great that?"

Chen Guang gave a wry smile. "I don't know. Even if I go all out with my falsetto, it's quite impossible for me to sing better than him. Controlling my falsetto is not a strong point of mine."

At least a B-list celebrity?

A falsetto that has reached the peak of perfection?

Who is it!

Who the fuck could this big shot be! Goddammit!

Chapter 1009: Voting!

It was almost time for the voting segment.

This was the most anticipated part of the show.

Dong Shanshan's hosting style was improving. She could take control of a situation and her hosting had become very good as well. After all, she was someone whose grades were much higher than Zhang Ye's during their Media College days among their entire class. A lot of people constantly focused on Dong Shanshan's looks, her figure, and her long legs, but neglected to consider her skills as a professional host. On the stage of King of Masked Singers, she knew quite well that she was just a supporting role and acted as a link between the event proceedings and flow of the show. As a result, she neither had to steal the show nor the lines. But when it came time for her to speak, she would definitely not allow others to ignore her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "I can see that a few of our judges are confused."

The audience laughed. In reality, they were confused too!

Wang Zhuishu said, "Yeah, I have no clue at all!"

Chen Yidong said, "It's the same for Petal Shower. I can't figure out who she is!"

Yao Jiancai gloomily said, "Is this a singing show or a game show? I'm not good at using my brain and my head is already swelling from all that thinking."

Dong Shanshan told them, "To improve your concentration and refresh your mind, please drink Bright Fruit Cocoa." Then she winked at the camera and emphasized, "It's free of preservatives too!"

With the title sponsor of the show being Bright Fruit Cocoa, she promoted it very naturally and seamlessly. The judges and

audience found it funny.

It was time for the judges to vote.

Chen Guang declared, "I'll not vote. There's no way to make a choice."

Zhang Xia also found it very difficult. She said, "Both of them sang in falsetto and had flawless performances. It is indeed hard to choose. I won't be surprised no matter who wins today."

Amy immediately said, "I like The Clown's performance more. I became his fan last episode, and I really like him so much. Even though The Clown's song did not contain any lyrics, I imagined a lot of images because of it. His voice and the song were so vivid that it brought all those images to mind. From the difficulty of the performance and song, The Clown's 'Opera' is undoubtedly the more stunning performance for me."

The Clown said, "Thank you."

Wang Zhuishu thought for a long time before saying, "I'll still give my support to Petal Shower. Although The Clown has moved me as well, I still prefer the way that Petal Shower expressed herself with her singing."

Petal Shower's mask concealed her face quite closely, with her entire head covered up so well that no one could even tell what hairstyle she wore. It was the same for her expression too. They could only see from her eyes that she was probably smiling. "Thank you, Teacher Wang."

Yao Jiancai expressed, "I think that The Clown is a little bit better."

Chen Yidong said, "Petal Shower is good too. Hai, it's so difficult to choose from between the two of them."

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Then let's leave the final voting to the 500 audience members and let them decide the winner." Looking into the audience, she said, "Everyone, please pick up your

voting devices to cast a vote for your favorite performance today."

The audience immediately got down to action.

Some of them voted without any hesitation at all.

Some of them were hesitating and couldn't come to a decision for a very long while.

"It's too difficult to choose!"

"Yeah, the two of them were incredible today!"

"If the two of them had gone against any of the other singers, I would definitely have voted for them. Why did these two big names have to compete against each other so early in the first round! How am I supposed to vote?"

"They both sang so great!"

"Agreed. Their ability to sing in falsetto is too close to call. Both of them are wonderful!"

"Then we can only judge based on the songs that they sang."

"Hai, I suppose I have to go with my gut then!"

"I still think that The Clown's singing was more breathtaking!"

"I think so too. A song with no lyrics? There's really no one else who can sing like this!"

"Petal Shower's singing was so full of emotion. Personally, I still prefer her."

All competitions were like this. Everyone had their personal preferences. Even for the best singer or song, it was impossible that everyone would like it due to everyone being different. For example, age, gender, and experiences would all create differences in the personality and perception of a person. This is very commonplace.

Backstage.

Several of the masked singers who hadn't appeared on stage yet

took a vote as well.

The producer who was accompanying them asked for their opinions. "Who do you all think will win?"

Sunset Glow pondered the question for a moment. "The Clown."

Sunflower in the Starlight shook his head. "It could be either one of them since they're both so equally matched."

God of War did not hesitate. "The Clown."

The other new replacement masked singer called Lord Peacock said, "I'm optimistic about Petal Shower."

In the studio.

The voting had already begun!

The judges were all staring at the screen.

Han Qi, who was standing in the wings, was getting extremely anxious as she clenched her fists so tightly that her nails cut into her flesh. She was shouting in her head, The Clown! The Clown! It has to be The Clown!

However, The Clown did not turn to look at the screen. He did not seem like he cared.

It was the same for Petal Shower. She gazed forward and did not turn around.

Their mental fortitude and stage presence were very strong. Just by their attitude, people would not believe it even if they were told that the two of them were not big shots. They indeed had the demeanor of a big shot, unlike those new singers who would often try to show off their talent or make a commotion when they became too focused on the result.

The audience was shouting the names of the singer they supported!

"Petal Shower!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Petal Shower!"

"The Clown!"

5 votes!

10 votes!

100 votes!

Their two tallies were very close and evenly distributed!

Without a doubt, this was definitely the most intense pair of contestants for this episode's matchup. The two of them had given a near perfect performance for everyone!

Finally, the voting ended!

The results were displayed on the big screen!

When the audience saw the result, they exclaimed in surprise!

The judges were astonished too!

Petal Shower's tally: 241 votes!

The Clown's tally: 259 votes!

Everyone thought that their tallies would probably be quite close or even separated by only one or two votes. But towards the end of the voting, The Clown's tally gradually pulled away from Petal Shower. In the end, he led Petal Shower by 18 votes!

The Clown won!

Petal Shower immediately applauded. She looked at The Clown and gave him a gentle hug with open arms.

Zhang Ye hugged her back for courtesy's sake.

Suddenly, he heard Petal Shower whisper to him, "I won't lose next time."

Zhang Ye was stunned.

Eh?

This voice?

When the masked singers spoke into the microphone, the signal sent back would be transformed by a voice transformer before getting transmitted over the speakers. But of course, their voices would not be changed during the performance as that would sound very strange. But when they spoke, the program team staff would make some adjustments to their microphones. That was why Zhang Xia kept saying that she had not heard Petal Shower's real voice before. However, when Petal Shower whispered into Zhang Ye's ear, it was not said through the microphone. It was just her voice coming from directly underneath her mask and not transformed through the voice transformer. Perhaps she had completely forgotten about disguising her voice.

It sounded familiar!

This voice sounded really familiar!

Zhang Ye had felt that there was a very high chance that Sunset Glow was probably someone he knew. But when he heard Petal Shower's real voice, he was sure that he definitely knew this woman!

Who was it?

Which friend was she?

His mind went blank all at once!

When he realized that they definitely knew each other, Zhang Ye was afraid to speak. He just nodded and smiled to express his understanding. He was afraid that if he opened his mouth, Petal Shower would instantly recognize him, although he was confident that nearly no one could guess who he was on this stage as almost no one would think to link him to this character.

This felt extremely nice!

Offstage.

The moment Zhang Ye came off the stage, he saw a dark figure rushing toward him!

"We won! We really won!" Han Qi was exclaiming incoherently in her excitement!

Zhang Ye felt his heart warm. "You're more excited than I am?"

Han Qi said, "But of course! The singer you won against is Petal Shower! She had the highest fanbase among all the masked singers! Nobody in the media and audience thought that you would get through to the next round! Everyone was doubting you! So how can I not be excited! How could I not be excited! This, this is so unreal!"

When the program team staff saw The Clown, they gave him a thumbs up raised high in the air!

Music Director Bai Yuanfei looked at Zhang Ye, and smiled and nodded at him.

The Clown was astonishing today!

The audience's understanding of The Clown had been flipped on its head!

This was The Clown after his voice had recovered?

This was his true skill?

No, that was not it. He still had not fully recovered yet. As someone who came down with a bad cold, fever, and inflammation of the tonsils and even took three cortisone shots, how could he possibly recover so quickly? If he had really recovered, then why did he not sing during the rehearsals? Instead, he saved his energy so that he could use it onstage? From that, it could be assumed that The Clown's voice was still not in the best shape!

With this thought, a lot of people were stunned by this

conclusion they had arrived at.

Damn!

Could he perhaps be even more amazing than that?

Could he perhaps still sing better than that?

Chapter 1010: The Clown's second song!

Backstage.

In the waiting room.

When Zhang Ye came back, he turned around and asked, "Water?"

Han Qi was caught off guard. "Huh?"

Zhang Ye cupped a hand and raised it to his mouth.

Only then did Han Qi understand what he meant and quickly went to get a bottle of mineral water for him.

When Zhang Ye finished drinking the water, he didn't say a word.

Han Qi said, "Teacher, for your next song..."

Zhang Ye shook his head and pointed at his throat, then waved his hand to signal that he could not say anything right now. In truth, it was not that he could not talk, it was just that he wanted to let his throat rest to the fullest extent. Having sung "Opera," his voice had reached its limits. If he sang it a second time, he might not even finish the song. Singing in falsetto was very tiring and caused the muscles in his nasal cavity and throat to tighten up. Moreover, he had only just recovered from his illness and stabilized his old injuries.

Han Qi understood, then got anxious. "Then what about your next song?"

Zhang Ye smiled and gave her a thumbs up, indicating that she need not worry.

He would not fight a battle that he wasn't sure of winning. As he had already anticipated this situation, he had arranged the order of his songs this way. The second song's style was decidedly unlike the first song's. Otherwise, there would be no way for him to sing

it. There was still about an hour's worth of rest left, and he felt that he could use it to recover.

...

In the studio.

The competition was continuing.

Sunflower Under The Starlight had already stepped out on stage.

"Set aflame!

"I'm burning!

"I wanna see blood flowing!

"Set aflame!

"I'm burning!

"I wanna send souls flying!"

Sunflower had chosen a rock song and performed similar to the way he had in the first episode. The only difference was that this song was not as thrilling as his previous two. The audience was still very excited, but seemingly not as excited as they were during the first episode.

Next, it was one of the replacement singer's turn to appear on the stage.

A very tough-looking masked singer appeared before the audience.

God of War!

His mask had a postmodern style of design and incorporated many different artistic elements in it. With a black-gray color as the foundation, he looked like a singer with very explosive power.

He looked just as his name suggested.

The moment when this person opened his mouth to sing, a high pitch voice sounded out.

"Oh!

"You're the sun in my life!

"Lighting my path forward!

"Giving me endless power!"

By rights, if the audience was seeing a new contestant appear for the first time, they should anticipate it a great deal. But for some reason, today the audience's reaction was not that great. Everyone was surprised and still applauded, but it did not match up to the masked singers' expectations.

Some of the audience members even started talking about something else.

"Who do you guys think The Clown is?"

"I really don't know!"

"For those male celebrities above the B-list, who else could sing so swell other than Chen Guang and those Heavenly Kings?"

"That 'Opera' was damned fucking godly!"

"Yeah, who the fuck has ever heard a song without lyrics?"

"I've fallen in love with him!"

"Me too! The Clown is amazing!"

"I'm looking forward to his next song!"

"Indeed. And his voice has almost returned to normal. We couldn't tell from the last song since it was sung in falsetto, but if he sings using his real voice, we'll definitely know who he is!"

God of War finished singing.

The voting began.

Sunflower in the Starlight received 222 votes!

God of War had 177 votes!

About a hundred members of the audience abstained and did not

cast a vote!

Sunflower in the Starlight won but did not seem too happy about it.

God of War gave a bitter smile since he could obviously feel that some of the audience members were not paying attention.

Then it was time for the last pair of contestants to come onstage.

The first to come out was the other replacement singer, Lord Peacock. Surprisingly, he sang a ballad song that was very pleasing to the ears as well as very popular.

The next to take the stage was the last singer for today, Sunset Glow. She maintained her style with the choice of a very calm song that she performed rather beautifully. Her performance today was even better than in the first episode.

"A song of yearning.

"Full of bitterness.

"A scene of loving.

"Full of sadness."

Sunset Glow had an overwhelming victory in the final vote!

Sunset Glow: 302 votes!

Lord Peacock: 115 votes!

There were still over 80 people who had abstained!

The program team staff could only smile wryly.

Zhang Xia looked to the judges next to her. "What's going on today?"

Chen Guang had figured it out. "The first pair's match was so spectacular that the audience's emotions have all been released."

Amy smiled and said, "Everyone has stopped paying attention to the other matches as they are trying to guess who The Clown is.

After all, he revealed that he's at least a B-list celeb, which has decreased the range of possibilities."

Chen Yidong coughed and said, "I'm already browsing through the list."

His cell phone screen was illuminated and showed the latest Celebrity Rankings Index on it. He was scrolling through all the celebrities on the B-list and trying to match someone with The Clown.

If even the judges were doing so, what could be expected of the audience!

Everyone had been shocked by The Clown's non-lyrical song!

The filming of today's show was done according to the broadcast order. Next up would be the elimination round. Of Petal Shower, God of War, and Lord Peacock, only one could remain on the show.

Petal Shower was the first to perform. But after she stuck to using her stunning falsetto to finish singing the song, there was no doubt about the winner.

God of War sang with all his might.

Lord Peacock did not hold back either.

However, Petal Shower still clinched the victory with an absolute advantage. There was no other outcome as she had the highest support base among all the contestants on King of Masked Singers, and her singing was flawless as well. Unless a heaven-defying big name singer came along, it would be very difficult to shake her.

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The audience shouted in unison!

God of War hesitated for a while.

Dong Shanshan looked at him. "God of War, please make your choice."

Eventually, God of War smiled and simply took off his mask.

When the audience saw who he was, they exclaimed in surprise!

"Brother Howling!"

"It's Brother Howling!"

"Damn, it's him!"

"I totally didn't expect that!"

"Ah!"

"I thought that it was his voice earlier when I heard it!"

Brother Howling was a nickname given by the netizens. His real name was Li Dongguo, a somewhat obscure name. But this man was last year's champion on a singing talent show that rode on the coattails of The Voice's popularity. Due to his singing style belonging to the type of screaming in which his voice would frequently explode in the extreme pitches, the netizens gave him this nickname. Since he was a very talented singer who came through the ranks of a talent show, a lot of people recognized him to be an elite singer. No one had expected that he would actually come onto the King of Masked Singers' stage!

"So he's still not good enough!"

"Brother Howling got eliminated immediately in his first appearance? He couldn't even make it past this episode?"

"Who said that he was an elite singer?"

"The professionals did!"

"Hai, not everything stands up to comparison!"

"Yeah, I did not think this way in the past and felt that Brother Howling was a fantastic singer. But when compared with people like The Clown, Petal Shower, and Sunflower, he's still not at their

level. Is this the difference between an amateur and a professional singer?"

"God of War had the explosiveness, but the firmness of his voice is leagues away from Sunflower's control of his!"

"But Brother Howling is a champion who came up through the ranks of a talent show! How could he have lost so terribly?"

"What about Lord Peacock?"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The audience started to shout again!

After some time, Lord Peacock also chose to take off his mask!

"Wu Hefan!"

"Ah!"

"It's him!"

"It's Wu Hefan!"

"Damn, wasn't he overseas? When did he come back?"

Wu Hefan was another very popular celebrity. He was a professional singer who had won the Best Newcomer award in the Greater China region two years ago and was nominated for the Most Popular Celebrity award last year. He was dashing and was one of the best-looking people in the music industry. However, his singing and performance abilities had never been acknowledged or gotten the attention of the audience. This was due to the fact that he had always been singing relatively mainstream and catchy songs.

"So Wu Hefan can also sing quite well!"

"Yeah, I really did not expect for him to come and compete!"

"Aiyo, if I knew it was him, I would have voted for him instead!"

"Damn, he's my prince!"

"Our Wuwu got eliminated just like that? Nooooo!"

A lot of the female audience members' hearts were shattered by this reveal. Many of them stood up and started shouting Wu Hefan's name.

But Wu Hefan just laughed it off as he raised his microphone and said, "Actually, I am only here to participate and learn from my seniors. After this contest, I can say that I've indeed learned a lot from them." Then he gave a wry smile and said, "They really are amazing. I lost fair and square and have no objections."

Amy said in regret, "Little Bro, I knew it was you the moment you opened your mouth and sang."

Wu Hefan laughed and said, "Hello, Sister Amy."

Amy looked very young, just like the other members of Spring Garden. However, they definitely were not as young as they looked.

Amy sighed, "What a shame."

Wu Hefan was fairly cheerful. "It's alright, Sister Amy."

Amy said, "You chose the wrong song today. With your talent, you can easily sing much better than that."

Dong Shanshan suddenly smiled. "Actually, there's still a chance for the eliminated contestants to make a comeback."

Amy was taken aback. "Ah?"

Both Brother Howling and Wu Hefan looked at her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Before the grand finals begin, there will be a revival round for the eliminated contestants to compete for a spot in the grand finals."

Wu Hefan grinned. "I'll be back."

At once, Amy replied, "All the best, Little Bro. You can definitely

do it!"

Chen Guang said, "All the best to you too, God of War. Your vocals are really good. Let's talk later if there's a chance."

When Brother Howling heard that, he got very excited as Chen Guang had always been his idol. "Thank you, Teacher Chen. I'll be very honored to hear your advice!"

Chen Guang quickly said, "It's not so much giving advice to you, but rather for us to learn from each other."

The contestants exited the stage.

Then it was time for the second episode's battle for Masked King!

Thinking of this, the judges were invigorated.

Some of the audience members shed their inattentiveness and concentrated fully on the next segment!

It was here!

It was finally here!

If the unmasking round was just a sideshow for many of the audience, then the following round was clearly the main event!

The Clown would be appearing onstage again!

And no one could guess what song he would be singing this time around!

Chapter 1011: I wanna walk from south to north!

In the studio.

Everyone was waiting in breathless anticipation!

The house band took their place and was joined by a group of folk musicians.

Intrigued, Chen Guang said, "Folk music?"

Amy wondered, "And what is he going to sing?"

Zhang Xia had already stopped talking. She was carefully observing the stage and waiting for The Clown to start singing.

Famous host Chen Yidong sat up straight. "I've been waiting for him for a long time. It's finally his turn again. As long as he uses his real voice, we can match it against those celebrities on the B-list and above, and we'll most likely guess who he is. I don't even wish to find out who Petal Shower and Sunflower are anymore! All I want is to know who The Clown is!"

Famous lyricist and composer Wang Zhuishu, who had a list of names in front of him, said, "For those on the B-list and above, ruling out all the female celebrities and those who cannot sing, there are only a few dozen possibilities left. I don't believe that I can't find out who he is. Even if he continues to hide or change the tone of his voice, there has to be a limit to how much he can do it. He can't possibly change it too much." But unbeknownst to him, he had already excluded that man right from the start.

Yao Jiancai interjected, "What if he's actually a woman?"

Amy burst out laughing, "Crossdressing?"

The Clown walked onstage.

Instantly, the sound of applause flooded the entire studio!

"It's starting, it's starting!"

"It's The Clown!"

"Hurry up and sing! I've been waiting for him!"

"Me too. Ever since his match with Petal Shower in the first round, I haven't had any interest in anything that happened afterward. Sunflower didn't manage to perform up to his potential either!"

"The key is that we know he's at least a B-list celebrity now, so that's really intriguing!"

"Right, who could it be!"

"Let's just listen to him sing first. He's recovered from his cold, and his voice seems to be back too. We couldn't hear him properly earlier because he sang in falsetto, but once he starts singing in his real voice, we'll definitely get a hint of who he is."

"Yeah, let's listen first."

"We have find out who he is, or else I won't be able to sleep!"

"That first song called 'Opera' was wonderful!"

"Rather than wonderful, it was spectacularly scary, OK?!"

"Yeah, even the godly Petal Shower was crushed by him!"

The contestants backstage were thinking the same.

Petal Shower was waiting with her eyes closed.

Sunflower in the Starlight was staring at the TV.

Sunset Glow did not blink as the names of a number of male celebrities popped into her mind, but all were shot down by her one by one.

Center stage.

Zhang Ye gripped the microphone as he glanced over to the judging panel and the audience. From the unbridled stares of the

crowd, he could read many things. Everyone was waiting for him to start singing to find out who he was. A smirk emerged from the corner of his mouth beneath the mask. Do you guys really think that you'll be able to identify me? Do you really think you can hear my voice and guess who I am?

The spotlights sparkled.

Everyone was focusing on him.

Zhang Ye could already feel himself falling in love with this stage.

Here, no one recognized him.

Here, no one knew who he was.

He had come alone and would leave alone. This was a really great feeling!

The music played!

First, the notes of a dizi gently floated in.

Next, a guzheng melody harmonized with it.

They were obviously folk music instruments, but the tune that played was clearly rock, its rhythm standing out!

Just this intro alone was enough to give the audience a high!

Startled, Chen Guang said, "This is rock?"

Amy was stunned. "Surely not? Folk music paired with rock?"

"It's definitely rock!" Chen Guang himself was a rock singer and he'd definitely know it if he heard it. He was absolutely sure that this was a rock song, which was the reason why he was startled. He had never heard of someone using a rock rhythm in folk music, and there wasn't even a drummer or guitarist playing? Weren't the folk musical instruments just for supporting accompaniment? They were used for the main melody instead?

Could it even be played this way?

Could rock actually be done in such a way?

Deng deng deng.

Deng deng deng.

Deng deng deng, deng di, deng deng.

Under the gaze of over a thousand sets of eyes, The Clown tightened his grip on the microphone and placed it close to his mouth.

His voice instantly resonated through the studio!

"I wanna walk from south to north.

"I wanna walk from day til night.

"I want people to look at me,

"But not know who I am."

It was really rock!

He was really singing a rock song!

You want everyone to look at you, but not know who you are?

The audience was stunned!

"If you see me a li'l tired,

"Please pour me a bowl of water.

"If you've fallen in love with me,

"Then please plant a kiss on my mouth."

The title of the song was displayed on the screen overhead the stage.

"[Fake Monk](#)."

What song was this?

It was another song that no one had heard before?!

What the fuck! From where did you get so many originals?

The judges were all going a bit crazy!

Especially Wang Zhuishu, who was a famous lyricist and composer in the industry. He knew a lot of people and as long as it was a slightly more well-known lyricist or composer in the scene, he knew them. Just from the beginning of this song, he knew that it was absolutely not a simple piece and definitely not a song that could be written by a newcomer. So what was going on? Just what on earth was going on with these songs that would give anyone who heard them the goosebumps!?

"I have this pair of feet and legs. I have this far and wide journey.

"I want the all of everything, but not hate or regret.

"If you wanna love me, don't fear regret!

"Cuz one day I'll be going far away!

"I don't wanna stay in one place,

"Nor want others to follow me."

Chen Guang was about to erupt. "Just who the hell is this!"

This song was so good!

The lyrics were so good!

The Clown had already performed three songs on this stage, but the one that Chen Guang liked best was the one he was currently listening to. Although it was his first time listening to it, Chen Guang could already feel the rock 'n' roll blood in him surging with excitement!

Wang Zhuishu quickly scanned through the list of names. "Which guy is it? Which celebrity could it be?"

Amy asked anxiously, "Have you found out yet?"

Yao Jiancai said, "Is there anyone that matches his profile?"

Chen Yidong was also checking who could sing from the list of celebrities on the B-list and above. "Li Yu? No, it's definitely not

him. Old Huo? It's not his voice either! Old Li? But he's currently on tour in Hong Kong! Who! Who is he!"

Wang Zhuishu said in exasperation, "Why don't any of these names match!"

The Clown used his explosive and impactful voice to continue singing.

"I wanna walk from south to north.

"I wanna walk from day til night.

"I want people to look at me,

"But not know who I am."

The audience was infected by the music!

This song was exceptionally fit for the stage!

Everyone could see him but did not know who he was!

With "Fake Monk," he had once again shocked the audience!

A lot of those in the audience no longer knew how to describe their current feelings!

The Clown was still singing. In fact, his voice was getting even higher. His real voice was different from that of his falsetto. It was not as clear, but when used in this song, it was the perfect combination!

"I just wanna see how pretty you are,

"But not know you are suffering!

"I wanna obtain Heavens' rains, but with none of your tears.

"I don't wanna believe there are really demons, or fight anybody."

The Clown walked forward a few steps and pointed upward.

"Don't try to figure out just who I am, "And don't try to see through this lie of mine."

Every word in The Clown's lyrics seemed to be sung to them, but also felt like they were sung for himself!

In the waiting room, Petal Shower exclaimed, "He's singing great!"

Sunset Glow said in astonishment, "He can even sing rock?"

The already eliminated God of War who had come through from a talent show was also convinced now. Losing to someone like that was nothing to be ashamed about. Suddenly, he felt a little lucky that he had faced a slightly less capable Sunflower today. If he had been matched against The Clown in the first round, he might even have lost 500 to 0 during the voting! That would truly have been embarrassing and he might not have had the courage to take off his mask if that had happened!

Freaks!

These were truly a bunch of freaks in the music industry!

Especially The Clown, who was the freakiest of the freaks!

Amy was already standing up, slapping the table in front of her and shouting, "Aiyo! Just which senior came to this stage to tease us?"

The Clown sang with a smile.

"La la la la la la la la.

"I want people to look at me,

"I want people to look at me,"

The music came to a stop.

It was silent onstage.

With a pause, The Clown closed his eyes and used his slightly magnetic voice to sing in a cappella: "I want people to look at me,

"But not know...who...I...am."

He sustained the last few notes before breaking off!

The song ended!

The Clown straightened and smiled, slightly bowing.

A burst of cheers erupted!

"Ahhh!"

"Bravo!"

"I love him to death!"

"Me too!"

"Isn't this song just fascinating?"

"How does he sing so well!"

"Who the hell is The Clown! Why can't I figure out who he is even after listening to his real voice!"

"I want to know so badly that I'm gonna go crazy!"

"His falsetto is unmatched, and his real voice is this amazing too?"

"The main thing is that his song is good too! It's really good!"

"The Clown! I dare you to take off your mask! Do you dare!"

"Aiyo, damn! I really want to know who the fuck he is!"

Backstage.

Petal Shower was nodding in approval and clapping!

God of War, who had already taken off his mask, was also clapping. He clapped so hard his palms turned red. "Bravo! This song is so perfect!" Then he looked at the camera and said to himself, "I'll definitely come back in the revival round! It would be such an honor to share a stage with this godly senior!"

Han Qi was shouting excitedly inside the studio, "The Clown! The Clown!"

The audience was screaming.

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

The Clown had left the stage.

Dong Shanshan retook the stage. "Thank you for performing, The Clown."

She had wanted to calm the audience down before inviting the second contestant to come out onstage. The next contestant was Sunflower in the Starlight, who was already waiting in the wins.

However, the audience's emotions could not be calmed at all.

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

A lot of people were still screaming!

Dong Shanshan had no choice but to keep quiet and wait for the audience to calm themselves down.

Sunset Glow, who was third in line to take the stage to battle for Masked King, smiled wryly when she saw this. The Clown was much too popular. How could they possibly compete against him?

A song without lyrics!

And a rock song!

At least for today, the stage belonged to The Clown. With those two songs, there was basically no question about who would be crowned as the Masked King today!

Among the present audience members, at least half of them had already become fans of The Clown!

The skills required to sing the song with no lyrics?

The spirit and idea behind "Fake Monk"?

Even if Zhang Yuanqi had worn a mask and come onstage, she might not necessarily have been able to beat him today!

Chapter 1012: The Clown's live rendition of 'Our Villagers'

After leaving the stage.

The Clown walked off with the audience cheering him on.

Han Qi was almost jumped in excitement. "Teacher! That was a really great song!"

With his performances complete, Zhang Ye could finally talk without hesitation. "It wasn't too bad. I think I did alright." He felt rather satisfied.

The song was not that easy to sing. In fact, it would be easier to sing some other songs that required the belting of high notes. In contrast, this song's high notes were not that obvious and there weren't many pitch changes either, so that made it very difficult to sing and would require a greater skill to execute well.

It was a song that didn't exist in this world. But in Zhang Ye's previous world, "Fake Monk" was a very illustrious song by [Cui Jian](#). It was a decades-old song and enjoyed quite the high status within rock music and music industry. It was known by virtually everyone, and later often performed by many people on various variety shows and singing talent shows as one of the more classic songs around. Celebrities like [Tan Weiwei](#), [Phil Chang](#), [Jeff Chang](#) had all covered it before, even Yu Qian. It could be seen from this alone just how important and enchanting this song was to people of that era.

Zhang Ye also liked "Fake Monk" a lot. The original version of the song used folk music instruments for its accompaniment as well. As one review had praised, Fake Monk had gone against tradition in the name of tradition with its accompaniment. Zhang Ye retained this arrangement as well as adding in some other things according his own understanding before presenting the song on

this stage.

On the way back to his waiting room.

A continuous stream of program team staff were giving him the thumbs up.

Some of them even approached him to ask for a photograph.

"Teacher, can we take a picture together?"

"Please take a picture with me, Teacher Clown."

"I like you so much!"

"That song was great!"

The song had touched quite a few people, especially the older ones who had a rush of emotions evoked from listening to the song!

Thinking of those songs The Clown sang during the audition in front of the program team, everyone nearly vomited blood!

How glorious it is to be an oil worker?

As a fifty-year-old pro driver, you are all smiles?

Bullshit!

That was all just pretentious shit!

This was the real Clown!

This was who The Clown really was!

While Zhang Ye took a few pictures with the employees here, Sunflower in the Starlight's voice came from the stage behind him. His song selections today didn't seem that good as he couldn't perform to the best of his ability.

"Living in this tedious world.

"What am I meant to do?

"Vastness, loneliness, companionship."

However, a lot of the audience were still happy with Sunflower's performance and trying to guess who he was.

As Zhang Ye was not exactly considered as part of this world, and he wasn't too familiar with the people here, he gave up on trying to guess. At least he was quite sure that he wasn't familiar with who Sunflower was, although nothing was definite since they were all wearing masks. So on this point, Zhang Ye himself did not want to confirm anything.

...

10 minutes later.

"We're here,

"Dancing in the wind."

Sunset Glow also finished singing.

The applause was enthusiastic!

There were cheers coming from everywhere in the audience!

Dong Shanshan came onstage at this moment and said, "Let's welcome The Clown and Sunflower in the Starlight back onto the stage."

Sunflower, who had been waiting in the wings and listening to Sunset Glow's performance, returned to the stage very quickly.

Meanwhile, The Clown made his way back from the waiting room and took a bit longer to get back.

As Sunset Glow was the last contestant to perform, the judges started giving their opinions about her singing first.

Zhang Xia said in astonishment, "I've come to realize that Sunset Glow's singing is really amazing. She has performed perfectly to her potential. I listened to those two songs in pure satisfaction!"

Sunset Glow laugh lightly and said, "Thank you, Grandma Zhang."

Wang Zhuishu agreed, "Sunset Glow seems to be the type of singer who slowly warms up as her voice silently starts to infect us. When you first hear her sing, it doesn't seem like much, but it really does get much better every time we listen to it. It can really touch people's hearts, so that's really good. I've come to rediscover Sunset Glow today, and I believe that she's definitely a professional singer!"

Chen Guang added, "Sunset Glow's weapon is not belting out high notes but sentiment and subtlety. There aren't many like her in the music industry."

Amy stared hard at her and had a niggling feeling that she was very familiar. "Do we know each other?"

Sunset Glow laughed. "Guess."

Amy said in annoyance, "The problem is that I can't guess at all!"

The audience laughed.

Yao Jiancai could sense something, so he said with a chuckle, "Amy, from what she's saying, I think the two of you must know each other."

Amy said, "I already have a candidate in mind, but I can't be sure!" She stared at Sunset Glow and said, "Are you the person I'm thinking of?"

Sunset Glow shook her head. "I don't know who you're thinking of."

Amy looked at her and said, "I'm very close to that person, so close that we've even shared the same skirt before. But that person's voice isn't as low as yours and her singing style is different too. Did you change your vocal register on purpose?"

Sunset Glow stopped answering and just laughed.

Amy immediately said, "That won't do. I better give her a call now and see if she answers!"

Amy then took out her cell phone on the spot and dialed a number.

Du du du.

Du du du.

After five or six rings.

Amy set her phone down in shock. "She didn't pick up! Could you really be her?"

Zhang Xia laughed and said, "Stop speaking in riddles. Just tell us who it is."

But Amy did not speak.

Next was Sunflower's turn.

Chen Yidong was still praising Sunflower as usual, with only the utmost praise for him.

But Zhang Xia said, "Sunflower still sang very well, but I'll reserve my opinions on his song choices for today."

Sunflower chuckled and just nodded.

Amy analyzed, "From his accent, I think he's a singer from Hong Kong."

Wang Zhuishu said, "Yeah, I feel the same. There's a 70 to 80% chance. Although his accent isn't that obvious, the pronunciation habits of singers from Greater China are very difficult to change."

Amy bluntly questioned, "Are you a singer from Hong Kong?"

The synthesized voice of Sunflower sounded. "The director won't allow me to tell."

The contestants' answers were all very conservative as they did not want anyone to so easily guess who they were.

Finally, the conversation shifted to The Clown.

Dong Shanshan asked, "Do our judges have anything to say about

The Clown's performance?"

Chen Yidong said, "There's nothing much left to say. All I can say is that I'm convinced!"

Wang Zhuishu smiled wryly and said, "He's definitely an excellent singer! The two songs today were good in both lyrics and melody, but the singing was even better. There's absolutely nothing to pick on! It was amazing!"

Amy asked anxiously, "Teacher Clown, which industry senior are you really? Can you stop teasing us like that? Just hurry up and let us know already!"

The Clown laughed.

Amy quickly asked, "Then can I ask you a question?"

The Clown thought about it for a bit before nodding.

Amy pointed at herself and asked, "Do we know each other?"

The Clown hesitated for a moment then gently nodded.

"We do!?" Amy scratched her head. She was going crazy. "Who on earth are you!"

Chen Guang quickly followed up, "Then do we know each other?"

The Clown coughed and then nodded again.

Chen Guang was going crazy too. "Among the people I know, there's not a singer who has a style like yours! I'm generally quite familiar with all the Mainland China singers, but there are some singers from Greater China I don't know. Could it be that you're from Hong Kong?"

Zhang Xia waved it off and said, "That can't be. How can he be with that kind of an accent?"

Chen Guang said, "He might have deliberately hidden his accent?"

Amy also said in surprise, "Oh yeah, he might really be from

Hong Kong! We might know each other, but there's also a possibility that we don't know each other well?" Then she asked The Clown, "Are you a celebrity from Greater China?"

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Where are you from?"

Chen Yidong also continued questioning, "Right, where is your hometown? Can we ask that?"

Everyone was looking at The Clown, wanting to know the answer!

Dong Shanshan was about to help him fend off the questions.

But no one could have expected that The Clown would raise his microphone and start singing through the voice transforming microphone in Cantonese!

"My ol' home, hey, is right in this hamlet!

"I was born and raised here in this hamlet!"

The people in the audience were floored!

But the more The Clown sang the more animated he become.

"Though our village isn't much, we have hills, rivers, and forests.

"The villagers are friendly and everyone gets on well.

"So many things have happened inside this hamlet.

"Thinking back on them, it's speshly funny.

"If you friends are in-ter-est-ed, I can show you, show you around, and have you meet our villagers!"

Amy burst out laughing!

Chen Guang was floored!

Zhang Xia, Yao Jiancai, and a few others cramped up with laughter!

Beside him, Petal Shower's shoulders were shaking uncontrollably. She was obviously laughing beneath her mask as

well!

Your ol' home is right in this hamlet?

Does Hong Kong even use the term hamlet at all?

Get lost! Just get lost! Who wants to meet your villagers!

And besides, doesn't your Cantonese sound too non-standard?

The audience was doubled over in laughter!

"Aiyo, I can't take it!"

"You can even come up with these sort of things on the fly?"

"I'm dying of laughter, hahahahaha!"

"Bro, what are you trying to do, imitating a Hong Konger like that!

"Pfft! I can see right through you and know that you don't have a rural residence!"

"Why is The Clown such a tease!"

"Who is he really?"

"I don't know!"

The program team staff were also amused. They thought to themselves about how these people did not see for it themselves when this person sang that "as a fifty-year-old pro driver, I am all smiles" song. He was truly an out-and-out troublemaker who could really come up with all kinds of nonsense! He pretended to be a worker once, and now, he's even pretending to be a citizen from Hong Kong?

Zhang Xia said with a laugh, "He's definitely not a singer from Hong Kong!"

Amy had to take her hat off to him. "Senior, don't pretend anymore. Really, stop pretending already!"

Yao Jiancai said, "If that's the accent of a Hong Kong singer, then

I'll be flying out to Australia for a concert tomorrow! That Hong Kong accent of yours was way too pretentious!"

Amy laughed, "Hahahahaha!"

Chen Yidong said, "This personality of his has confused me even more!"

Amy said while laughing, "Yeah, this makes it even harder to guess who he is!"

A Cantonese version of "[Our Villagers](#)" from Zhang Ye's world had tickled the judges and audience funny here!

Finally, the voting began!

The audience picked up their voting devices.

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Sunset Glow!"

"Sunflower!"

A lot of people were shouting the names of the contestants that they liked.

When the judges and contestants looked at the real-time tallies on the big screen, they couldn't help but give a wry smile. Right from the start, the difference between tallies pulled away!

The Clown was far ahead!

In the end, the results were decided!

Sunset Glow: 142 votes.

Sunflower in the Starlight: 101 votes.

The Clown: 257 votes!

The second episode's Masked King was crowned!

It was still The Clown!

The Clown continued to hold the title of Masked King!

The audience erupted into cheers!

The judges stood up and gave him their applause!

Chapter 1013: The Clown gets popular!

Saturday.

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

Today, Zhang Ye came over right after picking up his parents from the airport after they returned from their Hainan vacation. His grandparents had asked for their children to gather today for a meal as they missed them, with the food already prepared. In truth, Zhang Ye was planning to send his parents home first to sort out their luggage and rest for a while before coming over, but their flight was delayed. When they finally arrived, it was already five in the afternoon. Then, he got recognized at the airport by some fans and was trapped there for a long time. With the protracted delay, Zhang Ye was forced to go over right after picking up his parents.

"Brother!"

"Little Ye."

"Grandma, First Uncle, Little Sis."

"Why are you so late?"

"Hai, the flight got delayed."

"First Aunt and Uncle, how was the Hainan trip?"

"Hur hur, it was quite good. The air there was particularly refreshing."

"First Aunt, I'll take your luggage for you!"

"Look at our Dandan, she's becoming more and more sensible."

The entire extended family had essentially gathered by now. The moment they met each other, they started prattling and babbling on.

Zhang Ye greeted his grandpa and grandma, then enjoyed some time chatting with them. Shortly after, his three sisters

approached him all atwitter.

His third sister giggled, "Brother, are you still unemployed?"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Yeah."

His eldest sister blinked and said, "Why haven't you caused any trouble then?"

"Cause what trouble?" Zhang Ye asked, not understanding.

His second sister said, "In the past, during times like these, you would always come out to scold and bombard those people who had offended you. It's not your style to keep quiet like this!"

Zhang Ye didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Just why do you three have such a terrible impression of me? Why would I scold people without a valid reason? I'm no longer the same as before."

His third sister looked down her nose at him. "C'mon, you?"

His grandma tapped her in disapproval. "Young girl, how can you speak to your older brother in that manner?"

His third sister shouted, "Quick, come and see. Grandma's playing favorites again!"

Everyone laughed.

Zhang Ye was currently the most precious child at home. If his parents even dared to say a bad thing about Zhang Ye in front of his grandparents, they would glare at them, much less his three sisters.

Zhang Ye was also quite enjoying these rare family get-togethers. The competition yesterday had really tired him out. Not only had he worried about his vocal chords, it also took a lot of his concentration. He appreciated getting a rare chance to relax like this.

Dinner was ready.

They split into two tables as there were too many people.

His first uncle suddenly asked, "Little Ye, I heard that the show you produced is getting quite popular these days?"

His third sister immediately said, "It is not just quite popular, it's very popular!"

His mother swallowed a mouthful of food and said, "You don't say. The singers they invited this time are incredible! Their singing is each better than the last. I think that Sunflower and Petal Shower are pretty good!"

His first aunt said, "I like Sunflower too!"

His second aunt said, "Their songs are too complicated, so I prefer Sunset Glow."

His eldest sister spoke up, "The Clown's very good too. He was voted to be the Masked King in the first episode."

His second sister shook her head and said, "The Clown isn't that good. The media's talked about how he won in spite of his talent."

His third sister suddenly banged the table. "Aiyo, I nearly forgot. The second episode of King of Masked Singers is about to start. It's already 7:50! Quick, turn on the TV!"

"Oh yeah, let's watch it!"

"Yeah, we nearly forgot about it with all that talking just now!"

"Little Ye, who will become Masked King today?"

"Hur hur, watch for yourselves."

"It's definitely going to be Petal Shower."

"I think it'll be Sunflower."

"Sunset Glow's chances are quite high too!"

Almost everyone in the family had watched the show, and they all had their own favorite singers they supported.

The only thing that made Zhang Ye feel dejected was that no one seemed to be supporting The Clown. This fellow felt quite helpless

as he was wondered if it was because of the songs he selected being a little too non-mainstream? That the song's target audience was too niche? Should he attempt a more mainstream song for the next episode then? Speaking of which, as he was not considered to be someone from this world, all the songs that he brought out had never been heard before by the people of this world. This was his disadvantage, as well as his advantage. He had to slowly figure it out with every step that he took, without having any past experience to fall back on when choosing. Selecting which song to perform was very much like a test to him.

He would wait and observe what happened today.

To see what the reaction was after today's episode.

...

On Weibo.

It was whirling online.

"It's about to begin!"

"Holy shit, Petal Shower's popularity has reached 300,000 votes!"

"That's too fearsome!"

"She's been chosen internally as the Masked King for this episode, right?"

"More or less. The disparity is too much!"

"Did any news get leaked? Who got eliminated? Who took off their masks?"

"The Clown is sure to get eliminated, yeah?"

"There's no hope for him anymore. There's been too much negative press about him, with both the media and people bombarding him."

"Actually, I feel that The Clown is decent. Although his singing wasn't that good, that was due to him performing with a cold. We

should to try understand that."

"He only became Masked King because of the pity votes cast by people like you! So what if he had a cold? This is a competition. It has to be fair."

"Let's see how it goes. It doesn't matter what The Clown does in this episode. Everything will depend on the performance of my Petal Shower!"

Suddenly, a Weibo user appeared.

That person posted with a chuckle: "I'll tell you guys something unfortunate. The Clown has retained his crown as the Masked King for this episode."

"Pfft!"

"Can you please stop teasing us?"

"That's impossible!"

"Don't go around spreading rumors!"

"Anyone can be the Masked King except The Clown. He's been criticized so badly it's impossible for him!"

However, someone else appeared out of the woodwork. "The Petal Shower you guys thought would be the favorite was eliminated by The Clown in the first round. Ai, just watch for yourselves, I don't have the heart to strike you guys with another blow."

"Are you kidding?"

"For real?"

"Even if The Clown resorted to his previous tricks or sang a song with even better lyrics, it's still impossible that the audience would buy it a second time."

"I don't believe it!"

"Fuck, I also don't believe it!"

"Petal Shower's popularity has exploded, with Sunflower in hot pursuit behind her. Even Sunset Glow's popularity is much higher than The Clown's, so how can it be possible for him to be the Masked King!"

"Don't believe the rumors."

"Don't believe the rumors+1!"

"Don't believe the rumors+1000!"

Nobody believed it.

Then the second episode of King of Masked Singers was broadcast for everybody's viewing pleasure!

The first contestant to sing was Petal Shower.

"Wow!"

"My Petal Shower is coming on!"

"She's gonna sing, she's gonna sing!"

"Ahhh, I love listening to her singing!"

"It's still her style of singing!"

"I love her to death!"

"Masked King, she must definitely get crowned as this episode's Masked King!"

"It has to be her!"

"The Clown is next?"

"Hahaha, it's so unlucky for him!"

"Yeah, there's no more suspense in this matchup!"

Online, wave after wave of exclamations erupted as the netizens all praised Petal Shower's singing.

Next, The Clown took the stage.

When The Clown began to sing, Weibo fell silent without

warning!

"Ahh, ahh.

"Ahhhhh, ahh.

"Ahhhhh, ahhhhh.

"Ahhhhh, ahh."

...

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

His three sisters were dumbfounded!

His parents, uncles, aunts, and everyone else's hairs stood on end when they heard him sing!

"This!"

"H-His cold is gone?"

"Why doesn't this song have any lyrics?"

"Aiyo, I can't handle this. I'm getting the goosebumps!"

"What's going on? What's with this song?"

...

Zhang Yuanqi's house.

A couple of her good friends in the scene had come over for a dinner party.

The latest episode of King of Masked Singers was playing on the television, and they were analyzing it.

Zhang Yuanqi smiled and said, "Who do you girls think Petal Shower sounds like?"

Ning Lan, sitting cross-legged, said, "I can't tell since I'm not involved in the music scene."

The Heavenly Queen's manager, Fang Weihong, swirled her glass of red wine. "This show is quite popular, and is very fun to watch.

Sister Zhang, you can tell who she is?"

Zhang Yuanqi laughed. "I have a rough idea of who she is, but I can't be sure."

Then they heard different singing drift from the television.

At the start, they were not paying much attention to the show as they chatted among themselves. But gradually, their conversation came to a halt.

Fang Weihong was dumbfounded!

Ning Lan looked at the television in shock!

Zhang Yuanqi was slightly stunned as she turned to look at the television!

"Ahhh, ahhh.

"Ahhh, ahhh."

The voice filled the entire room!

Fang Weihong exclaimed, "Who the heck is this! Oh my god!"

Ning Lan was also in extreme shock. "Can this singing be any better than it is already?"

Fang Weihong asked, "Which song is this?"

Zhang Yuanqi replied, "There's no such song in the music industry!"

"It's an original?"

There were no lyrics!

Not a single line!

But they were completely caught off guard by the images that were conjured up in their minds!

...

A lot of the netizens on Weibo were going crazy!

Many of those who had called out The Clown last week for using lyrics to gain pity points were now feeling as though their faces had been slapped swollen. This was done on purpose! This man was definitely fucking with them on purpose!

"A song without lyrics?"

"Holy shit!"

"He sang it to such a godly level!"

"So this is what The Clown's real voice sounds like?"

"Dammit, this song made me cry!"

"Is it that good? How come I don't feel that way?"

"I didn't feel anything either, but his singing was amazing!"

"Didn't feel anything? You have to calm yourself when listening to this song. I was also moved by it. This song is simply an enjoyment to listen to! Who said that The Clown needed to rely on lyrics to win? Fuck their granny!"

"This face smacking is ruthless! I can already feel the pain on those media people's faces!"

"This song is fantastic!"

"Not even a single line of lyrics?"

"Who is this guy? Who is he?"

Many netizens threw a fit in an instant!

...

Within the music industry.

At an entertainment company.

A vice president was eating with his company's staff and some fellow industry professionals. When they heard that voice coming from the television in the room, they were all dumbfounded!

One second.

Two seconds.

The vice president shouted, "Little Li, go and check who that is! You must figure out who he is! If he's not contracted to any company, make sure to sign him to our company at all costs!"

The secretary, Little Li, hurriedly replied, "Understood!"

But it didn't take long before the question asked by the panel of judges was shown on television.

"Are you above or below the B-list?"

"...Above."

The table of people went quiet.

The vice president laughed bitterly. "Never mind. Don't bother trying to find out who he is. It's impossible that a big name who's at least a B-lister like him would not have a company."

A musician in the industry and seated at the table gasped. "Which famous person in the music industry went to compete on the show?"

King of Masked Singers was very popular!

It was so popular that many of those in the music industry—whether they be established singers or newcomers, including even the Heavenly Kings and Queens—were watching the show on TV!

A lot of people were shocked by the "Opera" The Clown had sung!

But without exception, no one was able to guess who The Clown really was!

Chapter 1014: Becoming famous!

The tables had turned!

Countless people who were previously calling out The Clown and showing disdain for him fell silent when "Opera" was performed. The media outlets vomited blood at the turn of events! Quite a few people were touched by this song, while there were many others who did not get affected by it. But even those who did not like this song could not say that this man's singing was not good. His falsetto had reached the stage of perfection!

"B-list?"

"There are only a few possibilities on the B-list and above!"

"Fuck, who is this guy!"

"I think I've become a fan of his!"

"Me too!"

"From hater to fan! He's amazing!"

"Ah, The Clown won!"

"He beat Petal Shower!"

"Poor Petal Shower!"

"Yeah, if Petal Shower had faced any of the others, she would've won!"

"Could The Clown have really been crowned Masked King?"

"Quick, quick, quick! When will The Clown sing his next song?"

The show continued.

However, the audience seemed to have been affected by the lyricless song. A minority of the audience was not even interested when the other contestants came on nor cared about the identity of whoever was taking off their masks. They were simply waiting to watch The Clown sing his second song!

Finally, the second episode's Masked King battle began.

The Clown was the first to perform!

He was using his real voice this time!

"I wanna walk from south to north!

"I wanna walk from day til night!

"I want people to look at me!

"But not know who I am!"

The moment "Fake Monk" was performed, it made quite a few viewers' pulses race!

"It's someone famous!"

"This definitely has to be a famous person in the music industry!"

"I don't like this song. It doesn't sound good."

"It's clearly very good!"

"I like this song a lot! It's so good on a spiritual level!"

"Me too, I love this song to death!"

"Petal Shower was unexpectedly sent into the elimination round, and Sunflower did not fulfill his potential either with a very average choice of song today. There's no one else who can compete with The Clown on today's stage!"

"'Fake Monk' is a good song!"

"This song alone can sweep everyone aside!"

"He put so much emotion into his performance!"

"I'm not so smitten with the song. Although the lyrics were very well written, the melody was run of the mill. But for some reason, when The Clown was singing this song, it kinda got to me. If I was at the studio, I would definitely have voted for him! This guy is super charismatic!"

...

Within the music industry.

Quite a few key decision making people were shocked!

On a phone call:

"Old Hu, go and watch Beijing TV!"

"What's the matter? I'm recording a new song right now."

"Go and listen already. The latest episode of King of Masked Singers is really godly!"

"Who's godly?"

"The Clown!"

"With that voice of his, how godly can his singing possibly be?"

"Go and listen to it then! Listen to what his voice sounds like after he recovered from his cold! When did such an experienced veteran appear in the music scene! Go listen to it and tell me if he's one of our old friends."

...

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

His mother and aunts did not feel much for this song.

But his father and uncles were mesmerized.

His second uncle said, "This song...is so well-written!"

His third sister suddenly shouted, "I'm defecting!"

"Ah?" His eldest sister did not get what she meant.

His third sister replied, "I'm not gonna give my support to Petal Shower anymore. From today onwards, I will support The Clown!"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "You can understand this song?"

His third sister said, "I don't understand it, but I like it anyway!"

His eldest sister said, "I like 'Opera.' His singing is so amazing. Brother, who is he? Hurry up and tell us!"

"I don't know either," Zhang Ye said happily.

His second sister said, "You must know who he is!"

Zhang Ye smiled but did not say anything.

His father suddenly spoke up. "Little Ye."

Zhang Ye turned around. "Yes?"

His father said, "Get two tickets to the live recording of King of Masked Singers for your mom and me."

Zhang Ye was stunned. "What for? Do you plan to go and watch?"

His father nodded.

His mother immediately said, "Right, get us two tickets!"

This was his mother's usual behavior. Zhang Ye was already used to it. But his dad, who was a calmer and more traditional person, had almost never asked for anything from Zhang Ye before. Since his dad surprisingly made such a rare request today, he naturally agreed to it.

Zhang Ye nodded. "Alright."

His third sister's eyes lit up. "Brother, I wanna go too!"

Seeing this, his second sister went over and tugged Zhang Ye's arm and said coyly, "Brother."

His eldest sister coughed and also said a little embarrassed, "Me too."

They tugged at Zhang Ye for a long time before he finally smiled and said, "Alright, alright, everyone will get a ticket each."

As the matter of the tickets was settled, the Masked King battle on the television came to an end as the three singers finished with performing.

His family immediately shifted their attention back to the TV, wanting to see who would be crowned Masked King this episode. But they got a surprise instead!

The Clown opened his mouth to sing again!

This was a song he came up with on the spot!

...

"Are you a singer from Hong Kong?"

"Where is your hometown?"

The netizens were made speechless at the next moment!

Their jaws dropped as they saw The Clown raise his microphone and singing passionately into it.

"My ol' home, hey, is right in this hamlet!

"I was born and raised here in this hamlet!

"Though our village isn't much, we have hills, mountains, and forests.

"The villagers are friendly and everyone gets on well.

"So many things have happened inside this hamlet. Thinking back on them, it's speshly funny. If you friends are in-ter-est-ed, I can show you, show you around.

"And have you meet our villagers!"

This Cantonese song blinded everyone who heard it!

A group of people were doubled over in laughter!

"Hahahahaha!"

"Aiyo, I can't take it!"

"How can he be so funny?"

"Where is this joker from?"

"Can he really be a celebrity that's above the B-list?"

"Pfft, judging from his manner, this fellow is probably bullshitting! You even proclaimed yourself to be from Hong Kong? Hong Kong, your sister! Aren't you just making things up!

Hahahaha, I guess he's lying about being at least a B-lister too!"

"That's also possible. There isn't any celebrity above the B-list who matches his profile!"

"Masked King!"

"The Clown has been crowned Masked King!"

"Amazing!"

"He really deserved the win this episode!"

"Yeah, The Clown was truly without equal today!"

"I'm looking forward to the third episode!"

"The next episode will be even more exciting!"

"Yeah, Petal Shower and Sunflower were not in good shape this episode, but they'll definitely fight back in the next episode!"

"That was really exciting!"

"Why I can't find 'Fake Monk' online?"

"'Opera' can't be found either! What's going on here?"

"They're originals, so they can't be found online."

"Ah?"

"Does The Clown intend to sing his originals for the entire competition?"

"No way, right? His company or his musician friends should've only written these four songs that were good enough for him perform onstage. Once there are no more originals left to use, he'll have to start covering the songs of other singers."

The broadcast ended.

Night fell.

But the discussions online and in the homes of the country's people did not stop.

...

The day after.

Sunday.

The viewership rating for the second episode of King of Masked Singers was out!

It was a figure that would send the industry into an uproar again—2.98%!

At Central TV.

Department 1.

Director Jiang Naixiong was silent.

Scowling, Jiang Yuan lost his temper with his subordinates. "How many episodes has our new show been broadcasting for already? Huh? Why are you all just unable to bring up the viewership ratings for it? Just have look at the viewership ratings for yourselves! Ah?"

The Department 1 staff did not dare make a sound.

There's nothing we can do even if the viewership ratings are poor!

It was all because of your insistence on fighting that lawsuit with Zhang Ye and freezing him that led to this!

If our station had not forced him away, the King of Masked Singers would definitely have been ours! What's the point of blaming us now?

On the Top Chinese Music Chart.

The songs that were performed on the King of Masked Singers were doing brilliantly on the chart!

The Clown's "Opera" and "Fake Monk" had already climbed up to the top three spots of the daily chart, while Petal Shower and Sunset Glow's songs from yesterday's television broadcast had

climbed into the top six spots!

The songs were on fire!

The entire music chart had almost become wholly occupied by the King of Masked Singers' songs!

The entire music industry's attention was now focused on King of Masked Singers!

And the most unexpected thing was that The Clown's Cantonese song he performed at the end of the episode called "Our Villagers" had also shot up to the top 15 songs on the daily rankings. Many of the netizens were repeatedly playing it, laughing as they listened to it each time! The song was hilarious! It was totally a prank!

At home.

Zhang Ye's popularity score was still slipping on the Celebrity Rankings Index.

In contrast, his Reputation Points in the game ring were increasing rapidly. It seemed that with each glancing minute, his Reputation Points would shoot up. Since no one knew that he was The Clown, the popularity gained by The Clown would naturally not be added to his name. But the game ring did not have this limitation. Everyone who liked The Clown would give Zhang Ye additional Reputation Points without fail!

This was great!

He would just carry on like this!

It looks like this bro's decision to cross over into the music industry was the right one!

Chapter 1015: Zhang Ye proposes! (First half)

Monday.

In the morning, his parents arranged to have a day out at the Summer Palace with two neighbors.

Zhang Ye was bored and stayed home to practice his songs over and over again. As Mother's Day fell on this weekend, he incidentally thought about the song for this week and if he should perform one that transmitted a message of love for mothers. However, he did not have a specific idea of what to sing yet since there were still five days to go, and there was no rush to decide that quickly.

He checked the show's official website.

The Clown's popularity has leaped to first place!

First: The Clown (470,000 votes)

Second: Petal Shower (410,000 votes)

Third: Sunflower in the Starlight (320,000 votes) Fourth: Sunset Glow (290,000 votes)

Although The Clown had jumped from fourth to first in the popularity poll, the gap was actually not that much. Besides, Zhang Ye had won the crown of the Masked King twice in a row. His momentum was ruthless, which made it difficult for him to lag behind in the competition.

Quite a few people were leaving comments on the official website.

"Who does everyone think will get crowned as Masked King in the third episode?"

"The Clown, of course. I love his songs so much!"

"I doubt it'll be him."

"Yeah, he's already gotten it twice."

"Right, everyone knows how strong he is and will therefore have higher expectations. The audience might be disappointed if he doesn't perform his next song perfectly, or if his chosen song is not that great, or maybe even if his next song is not another original. Considering all that, it's gonna get quite difficult for The Clown for the rest of the competition."

"We can't expect that every one of his songs are originals and that they'll be that good, can we?"

"Then does that mean Petal Shower's chances are better now?"

"Sunflower and Sunset Glow have some hope now."

"They're all pros and can sing really well, so that makes it really difficult to say who'll win."

Reading the reviews, Zhang Ye turned things over in his mind. He thought that the netizens were correct. In his current position, it was indeed very difficult for him to make any additional progress as no one person could keep getting crowned as Masked King forever. It wasn't a matter of singing skills, but the expectations of the audience. However, luckily for this fellow, he still had a trick up his sleeve. A very classic song from his previous world had yet to be revealed by him and was meant to be a backup. From the looks of it, he had to choose a more generic song this time—perhaps one that everyone would like the moment they heard it?

Which song?

It was really difficult to choose.

All of a sudden, his cell phone rang.

The caller ID displayed: Wu Zeqing.

Zhang Ye broke into a grin and answered immediately. "Old Wu."

The gentle voice of a woman came from the other end of the line. "Hur hur, you sound like you're in a good mood?"

"Haha, more or less," Zhang Ye said. "Isn't today Monday? What's the matter? Not working?"

"I just got back from a business trip and took a day off to rest."

Zhang Ye knew that she had gone on a business trip for many days. It was related to the aftermath of the air pollution documentary. At that time, Wu Zeqing had helped him hold off endless pressure from all sides and kept the air pollution documentary online for an extra day or two. She'd offended a lot of people and then left Beijing on a business trip. He didn't need to ask to know for sure that she must have gotten implicated in this matter. "Did the air pollution documentary cause you a lot of trouble?"

She laughed. "It's already been settled. It wasn't too troublesome."

On these official matters, Zhang Ye did not know much. But since Old Wu said it was already settled, then it must have really been settled. Unlike Dong Shanshan who was always deceptive, Old Wu would give it to him straight.

Zhang Ye felt reassured. "You're at home?"

"Yes."

Zhang Ye asked: "I'll go over to look for you then."

"Sure. What would you like to eat?"

Zhang Ye bluntly said: "Deep-fried mandarin fish and sautéed pig's kidney. You know how to cook them?"

"Yes."

"Alright, wait a little for me," Zhang Ye said.

"OK, then I'll go and buy the groceries."

Having not seen Old Wu in a while, Zhang Ye was very much so looking forward to seeing her again. He took a shower and changed his clothes, then groomed himself in front of the mirror for the longest time before finally going downstairs to his car and driving off.

Perhaps due to the morning rush hour, there was a small traffic jam outside.

Before a traffic light intersection, more than a hundred vehicles were stopped and could not move.

At this moment, Zhang Ye heard a man singing from a car beside his that had its windows rolled down. "I wanna walk from south to north! / I wanna walk from day til night!"

Has "Fake Monk" really become this popular?

It's only been two days and there were already people who knew how to sing it?

But then again, big bro, the traffic is all snarled, and you're still thinking of going from the south to the north? I'd bow to you if you could even make it to the traffic lights up ahead! But there was still a chance that you might be able to go from day til night!

All the best!

...

At 10 AM.

Taoran Pavilion's East Gate, Old Wu's place.

In the villa, Wu Zeqing was sitting on the sofa and reading the papers.

The door opened. When Zhang Ye entered the house, he immediately took a look at his girlfriend. The weather was getting warmer and warmer, and Old Wu was dressed in a more relaxed qipao today. It wasn't the type of long qipao she wore in the spring and autumn, but the short version of it. The color was very plain,

but at the hem of the qipao above her knees, a pair of supple thighs were exposed and looked particularly alluring. The chest region fabric in the top half of her qipao looked like it full to bursting.

Zhang Ye swallowed hard. "Old Wu."

Wu Zeqing turned to him and said with a smile, "You're here?"

"There was a traffic jam, otherwise I'd have gotten here even earlier." Zhang Ye walked over. "What are you reading?"

"News regarding King of Masked Singers." She flapped the newspapers in her hand.

"You've watched the show too?"

"I have. It's quite good."

Zhang Ye blinked and asked, "Who do you like?"

"The Clown and Petal Shower, I guess. They're both pretty good."

Zhang Ye was very happy.

Look at this, just look at this!

It was still his girlfriend who had good insight!

Sitting down on the sofa, Zhang Ye took the newspaper from her. "Let me have a look." After flipping through a few of the pages, he didn't feel comfortable enough. He turned his head and glanced at Old Wu's thighs, then coughed and unceremoniously laid down onto them. Half of the back of his head was cushioned by the qipao, while the other half was lying directly on her thighs. His left ear vaguely touched her skin and he could feel the cooling smoothness and softness of it.

How comfortable!

Zhang Ye was enjoying it to the fullest extent.

Wu Zeqing did not say much and just smiled. "What have you been up to recently?"

Zhang Ye read the newspaper while lying down. He remarked,

"I've just been staying at home."

Wu Zeqing said, "There aren't any TV stations willing to hire you?"

"Yeah," Zhang Ye replied.

Wu Zeqing gave a noise of acknowledgment. "I'll make some arrangements for you later."

"There's no need to, there's really no need. I've worried you enough already, and even given you a lot of trouble. There's no need to bother yourself with this problem for the time being. This bro can solve it by himself." Zhang Ye put the newspaper down and looked up at her. He did not manage to immediately see Wu Zeqing's face. From his angle, all he could see was Old Wu's dress protruding out in the region of her chest, and his view of her face got blocked. "I've been doing something that's been keeping me quite busy, so I can't actually find time to deal with other work. But as for what it is exactly, I'll keep it a secret for now. Haha, you'll know about it in time anyway."

"Really?"

"Just watch what I can do. Have I ever let you down before?"

"Alright, I'll wait and see then."

Since Zhang Ye wanted to keep her guessing, Old Wu did not continue with a line of questioning.

This was how the two of them had interacted for the duration of their relationship.

Keeping it simple.

Trusting each other.

Chapter 1016: Zhang Ye proposes! (Second half)

Before noon.

A little after 11 AM.

Zhang Ye was still lying across Wu Zeqing's thighs with his shoes off. He was jiggling his arched legs and browsing Weibo on his cell phone with one hand. He would turn his head to the left for a bit, and after he got tired in that position, he would nudge his neck upward. His neck, ears, and face were all resting on a soft surface that felt far more comfortable than laying on a pillow. Zhang Ye was enjoying it so much that his eyes were just a thin line.

That was how good it felt!

That was how blissful it was!

Old Wu was conversing with him all this while.

"The issues with the air pollution documentary have almost blown over."

"OK."

"But you should stay low for a while. You've offended too many people this time, so some time needs to pass."

"No problem. I was already mentally prepared for this."

"The new policies have become much stricter, so take caution. Be it writing poems or novels, it will be best if your works don't involve too much pessimistic content or mention things like 'death' or 'massacre' in the title of the poem."

"New rules?"

"They're not out yet, but it should happen sometime soon."

"Alright, I understand."

"Is Ning Lan your friend?"

"Ah? I guess so. I do know her."

"She's wrapped up filming for her new movie, and it's been sent in for review. But it was not approved due to some scenes violating the policies."

"Then what can be done?"

"We've already told them to cut those scenes."

Mostly, it was Wu Zeqing who did all the talking while Zhang Ye listened. There were some matters that not even the talent agencies of celebrities could know about, but Zhang Ye would get firsthand information of it ahead of time. He was the only person in the entire entertainment industry who had such a privilege.

As he listened, Zhang Ye's neck got tired from the laying and he switched to a different position. This time he blinked before turning his head to face Old Wu's stomach, rolling his body over as well. With that, his face was now directly facing her qipao's slit and his eyelashes reflexively stirred as they came into contact with the fabric at the slit. This was how close he was to her.

His heart was pounding.

He also started breathing a little faster.

He now felt Old Wu shift. Then her long hair cascaded down and fell next to his ears and face, making him itchy.

Old Wu bent over and said, "Alright, it's time to make lunch."

Zhang Ye said, "There's no hurry. Let me lie here a bit more."

Old Wu did not say anything.

This made Zhang Ye even ballsier.

After laying there for another five minutes and having finally seen enough, Zhang Ye got up from her legs and sat up on the sofa. He breathed in through his "burning" nose and felt a little heated.

Wu Zeqing slowly stood up. "Go wash your hands and wait for lunch."

Zhang Ye said, "I can help you cook?"

"There's no need." Old Wu headed to the kitchen and got down to business.

It was an open kitchen on the first floor. Zhang Ye's gaze did not leave her. He simply switched to a different spot on the sofa and faced the kitchen as he stared at Old Wu, who was busy cooking. Having not seen her in a while, Zhang Ye really missed her quite a bit. He felt that it was not enough no matter how much he looked at her. After looking at her face, he looked at her hands; after looking at her hands, he looked at her legs; after looking at her legs, he looked at her feet; after looking at her feet, he looked back up at her hair. It felt to him that every part of her was just too beautiful.

How he loved her!

How he really wished to marry her!

Zhang Ye remembered asking Old Wu last year about getting married in the next year. She had not rejected him at the time, and it was now the next year. His thoughts were suddenly aroused again. Wu Zeqing was definitely someone he wouldn't find anywhere else in his entire life even if he tried his hardest. If he did not hurry, she might get away from him at some point in the future! Although Wu Zeqing was much older than him and was in the civil service, Zhang Ye was an A-lister now. Moreover, he had many statuses, such as associate professor at Media College and Peking University, poet, writer, famous host, famous TV show director, famous TV show producer, famous crosstalk actor, and so on and so forth. So he should be quite compatible with her, right?

The only thing was that there would be a conflict of interest.

Zhang Ye was from the entertainment industry.

And Old Wu happened to manage the entertainment industry.

Upon reflection, there were certainly a lot of problems with this. Would the SARFT allow it? Would Old Wu's family agree to it? Even Old Wu herself, would she agree to it?

Zhang Ye was utterly clueless and was in a bind.

Would it work out?

Would it not?

Would it work out?

This problem weighed heavily on his heart for a long time.

Suddenly, a delicious smell reached his nose. Only then did he realize that the food was served.

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Lunch is ready. Let's eat."

When Zhang Ye saw the food, he exclaimed as he walked over, "Wow, just looking at it makes my mouth water!"

"Have a taste." Old Wu undid her apron and placed it on the back of a chair. Then she sat down. "I don't usually eat [kidney flowers](#), so I seldom cook them. Try how they taste."

Zhang Ye grabbed some of the piping hot kidney flowers with his chopsticks and blew on them for a while before eating them. "Hoo, it's delicious!"

This cooking was the best!

How could it be so delicious?

During these days his parents were away at Hainan, Zhang Ye would either order takeout or cook himself a simple meal of instant noodles, whichever he could make do with. That made him lose interest in eating recently as he did not have an appetite for whatever other food he came across. But when he sampled the food cooked by Old Wu today, he nearly burst into tears. It was so delicious it was worth crying over!

He gobbled up the food at once and rambled as he ate, "It tastes great! Whoo...it's so delicious! The deep-fried mandarin fish is delicious too! Hoo...it's so savory!"

Wu Zeqing smiled gently. "Eat slowly."

"I can't." Zhang Ye did not listen as he ate even faster. Eventually, he realized that he was almost full, whereas Old Wu had barely touched her food. "Eat some too, Old Wu."

"I will," Wu Zeqing said as she ate her portions slowly.

Zhang Ye sighed and said, "If only I could taste your cooking every day, how nice would that be?"

Old Wu said as she slowly ate her food, "You can come over to eat anytime."

Zhang Ye looked at her. "You're usually busy working, and I have many things to handle too, so it's not easy to find a day where both of us have free time. Besides, even if we were free, it still isn't appropriate to come by your house so frequently. What happens if the neighbors see us? How would you explain it if your relatives and friends came to visit?"

A strong desire suddenly overcame him.

Zhang Ye readied himself as he picked up some kidney flowers with his chopsticks and put them into Old Wu's bowl. He did not know where he found the courage, but he said very suddenly, "Old Wu, why don't we get married?"

Wu Zeqing was startled, then broke into a half-smile.

Zhang Ye asked, "Shall we?"

Wu Zeqing said, "Is this a proposal?"

"Ahem, yes, it is," Zhang Ye said.

She pointed at the kidney flower in the bowl with her chopsticks and said, "This is the first time I've seen someone use a kidney flower to propose."

Zhang Ye felt extremely embarrassed!

Other people would either use a diamond ring or roses to propose. At the very least, he should have followed that classic scene in the movies of breaking off the pull tab of a soda can to use as a ring for the proposal, right? But just see how great Zhang Ye was to even try to propose with some kidney flowers! In fact, this fellow did not think or plan much at all. He was someone who did something whenever he felt like it. Despite being quite witty most of the time, he was actually quite a dense person when it came to romantic affairs.

"About that, um..." Zhang Ye just grinned as he did not know what else to say. Should he go out to buy a ring and come back afterwards? But that would be too late!

Wu Zeqing did not say a word.

Zhang Ye was quivering inside.

Old Wu lowered her head to continue eating. She picked up the kidney flower from her bowl and put it into her mouth. After chewing a little, she swallowed it, then ate some rice. A moment later, Wu Zeqing looked up at him.

She calmly spoke, "OK."

Zhang Ye was stunned. "Ah? What do you mean by OK?"

She said, "Didn't you propose to me?"

Zhang Ye said in a startled manner, "Yes?"

Wu Zeqing replied, "So I've agreed to it."

Aiyo!

You've agreed?!

Zhang Ye could feel the blood in his entire body coursing hotly. He used his pinky to pick his ear and said in disbelief, "Old Wu, can you say that again?"

Old Wu smiled. "I've agreed to it."

Zhang Ye slammed his chopsticks onto the table, at a total loss for words!

He had acted on impulse today and did not have any hope of achieving anything definite. All he had was only the strong intent in his mind, which was what made him propose. For anyone who was even a little prepared, they would never propose with kidney flowers. But he could never have expected that Old Wu would actually say yes! At this moment, even that mouth of Zhang Ye's that could bring someone back to life was unable to muster up any words to express himself!

Hahahaha!

He did it!

His proposal was a success!

Whoever said that roses had to be given when proposing?

A kidney "flower" was still a flower!

kidney flowers - scalloped pork kidneys

Chapter 1017: A Masked Singer's identity is exposed!

Friday.

On the day of the recording.

In the morning, while his parents were still sleeping, Zhang Ye strolled downstairs, bought breakfast, and brought it home. Then he woke his parents up for breakfast, even humming a little ditty as he did.

Our people!

Are so happy today!

He had been humming this tune for several days now.

His mother wondered, "What's gotten into you?"

Zhang Ye asked, "Wha?"

His mother said, "You're like a completely different person these days, buying breakfast and doing the laundry. Did something happen to you? Tell us if you have any problems so that your dad and I can mentally prepare. I'm so unused to seeing you this hardworking out of the blue."

Zhang Ye laughed. "What problems could I possibly have? Mother's Day is coming up, so of course I've got to do a little something for you."

His mother did not believe his drivel. "Is it money you need? I still have some money in my account. Tell me if you need to borrow some. Don't feel embarrassed."

His father nodded and said, "Right, your mom is rich."

Zhang Ye was floored. "Why would I need to borrow money?"

His father said, "There's no shame in asking."

Zhang Ye saw red. "I don't feel ashamed!"

His mother asked, "So how much do you need?"

"I need...why would I need anything? You two have confused me." Zhang Ye did not know what to say or how to react. He spoke, "Alright, you two should eat breakfast quickly. I have to go to Beijing TV now to see how the production is going. I've already told them about your ticket requests, so you two can head over right after breakfast."

"Alright, we understand."

"I'll get going first then."

"You really don't need any money?"

"...I really don't need any!"

He shut the door behind him.

Zhang Ye was both amused and annoyed as he headed downstairs to drive off to the office.

But before he could drive out of the entrance to the neighborhood, he received a message on his cell phone. He received a 10,000 RMB transfer from the account with the last four digits of XXXX. This account number looked quite familiar and probably belonged to his mother.

Zhang Ye really had to take his hat off to her!

She was serious about lending him the money?

He was currently unemployed and had never taken any commercial appearances, so didn't have too much money, but at the same time, he didn't exactly spend money! He wondered to himself just how lazy he was in his parents' eyes. All he had done was buy breakfast and do the laundry for two days, but his parents were already starting to get suspicious of him?

Where could he seek redress from?

He had just been really happy for the past several days since his proposal had succeeded, with Old Wu agreeing to marry him. Even when Zhang Ye was promoted to the A-list, he did not feel as excited as now. This was Wu Zeqing we were talking about here, the wife he had been dreaming of all this time. By achieving it just like that, he felt like he was dreaming. Even though the details of wedding planning, how to introduce their parents, and of when exactly to get married had yet to be decided, the decision to get married was already set in stone. Old Wu could no longer slip out of his grasp. As such, Zhang Ye felt the load on his mind being lifted. He was now full of energy and had never been so full of fighting spirit before! This sort of attitude naturally affected his daily life. It even ended up making his parents misunderstand him!

Some people would give presents or money during Mother's Day.

But not only did he not give anything to his mother, he even received a sum of money from her.

Hai, whatever, he should just accept it. Since it was a token of love from his parents, Zhang Ye shamelessly accepted it. It just so happened that his car needed some maintenance, so the money would come in handy.

...

At Beijing Television.

In the rehearsal room.

Zhang Ye had long since changed into The Clown's mask and costume.

"Musicians."

"Hi, Teacher Clown."

"Teacher Clown, you're here?"

When they saw The Clown, the band members went up and greeted him with great enthusiasm.

The Clown choked his voice and said, "You guys aren't busy, are you?"

The guitarist said, "No, Teacher Petal Shower's rehearsal isn't for another hour. Although we finished rehearsing with her yesterday, she said that she still needed another round or two of rehearsals to help her get into the rhythm."

The Clown said, "Then can you give this hour to me?"

The guitarist smiled and said, "Sure."

The Clown said, "I would like to rehearse another two songs."

He handed the scores to them.

Music Director Bai Yuanfei and the band members were stunned.

Curious, Bai Yuanfei asked, "Didn't you rehearse two songs yesterday?"

The Clown said, "I would like to add two more songs as backups since I haven't decided which songs to sing yet. I'm still considering."

"You really are striving for perfection." Then Bai Yuanfei looked to the band members.

The band members thought for a while before readily agreeing, "No problem, let's do it!"

Among the masked singers, only The Clown had truly gotten to know the band members. Be it "Wild Rose," "Wolf," or "Fake Monk," all those songs suited their tastes quite well. Since they had all started out by dabbling in rock music, and since only The Clown had performed a rock song on this stage, they naturally felt that they had something in common.

In the audience, Han Qi watched them nervously.

The rehearsal began.

During this rehearsal, The Clown once again did not sing the

lyrics and just hummed along to the music. He mainly wanted to get a grasp of the rhythm to refine any details and problems with the arrangement. Zhang Ye was the type of singer who liked to do things spontaneously and would habitually surprise and shock the audience. As a result, he did not like to reveal the lyrics beforehand as that would make his performances meaningless. To the other singers, this sort of rehearsal was simply unbelievable. How could he just go onstage without even singing once? Only a person with such strong self-confidence as Zhang Ye would dare to do that. Back when he was still hosting, this fellow was famously known as a madman. He even had the courage to go on a live broadcast without preparing any lines or script to speak from. There was no one like him in the entire industry!

An hour later, Petal Shower arrived.

Zhang Ye ceded the rehearsal room to her.

Following, Sunset Glow came to do her sound checks.

Just when everyone was preparing for the afternoon's recording session, something happened in the outside world that no one could have expected. Zhang Ye, along with the other masked singers and the King of Masked Singers program team, were dealt a sudden blow!

A masked singer had revealed his identity!

...

The origin came from Weibo.

After King of Masked Singers became popular, many people started guessing who the masked singers were.

The Clown, Petal Shower, Sunflower, and Sunset Glow had continually dominated the last two episodes of the show, and had undoubtedly garnered the most attention from the audience as well. The netizens were all guessing as to who they were.

"I really can't figure out who The Clown is!"

"He's the hardest to guess!"

"At least a B-lister? But there's no one that matches!"

"He might only be joking and is probably not a B-list celebrity."

"Could Petal Shower be Zhang Yuanqi?"

"No."

"How is the singing of Spring Garden's Xiaodong?"

"Uh, she sings very well. But since I haven't heard Xiaodong singing these types of songs before, the chance of her being Petal Shower isn't that high."

"Sunflower in the Starlight has to be a singer from Hong Kong."

"Right, I'm 90% sure about that as well."

"A Hong Konger who can sing this well? Li Yu?"

"It's possible!"

"Or it could also be Li Nianhe!"

"Li Yu was a big name A-lister in the past. Although he has dropped to the B-list now, he is still extremely popular. Would he have come to compete? Surely not, right?"

"He hasn't sung any Cantonese songs yet, so we still can't identify him from his voice."

Everyone made all kinds of guesses.

Finally, someone went straight to Li Yu's Weibo to ask if he was Sunflower. In truth, there were several netizens who went to ask some of the other Hong Kong singers if they were Sunflower. Their guesses did not focus on Li Yu alone. Perhaps even those netizens did not expect Li Yu to actually reply on Weibo.

Li Yu posted on Weibo: "You could even guess that?"

He actually admitted to it!

This came without any warning!

With that reply, it exploded online!

The media reacted like they had been injected with adrenaline!

"It is Li Yu!"

"Damn!"

"Sunflower is Li Yu!"

"A former A-lister?"

"W-What a big name!"

"Oh my god! They even managed to invite Li Yu to the show?"

"He must be the most famous singer on King of Masked Singers!"

"That's impossible. If he really is Li Yu, with his talent, if there aren't any other big shots of the music industry like Zhang Yuanqi or Chen Guang on the show, shouldn't he be crowned Masked King every episode? Would he even have any competition? So why has he not come within reach of Masked King even though the third episode is about to air?"

"Are you dumb? That's because he hasn't sung any Cantonese songs yet!"

"Yeah, Cantonese songs are what Li Yu is best at!"

"He can still perform on par with those singers by singing Mandarin songs. If he had sung Cantonese songs instead, the throne of Masked King would definitely have been his!"

"I'm really looking forward to it!"

"It's really Li Yu!"

"Ahhh, I'm a braindead fan of his! I will definitely support him!"

"I'll be attending the recording today as I won a ticket from a lucky draw. Hahahaha, no matter what song Li Yu sings, I'll vote for him! I've always liked his songs and movies a lot!"

Awhile later, Li Yu posted on Weibo again. "I'll perform two

songs to my best for everyone today. Thank you for your support!"

The fans went crazy!

"That's for sure!"

"We'll definitely give our support!"

"My idol, I love you!"

"Teach them a lesson!"

"Right, teach them a lesson!"

"The Masked King's crown will surely be yours!"

"We'll all vote for you!"

"So it's Sunflower who is the hidden god-tier contestant!"

"So will there be any suspense in this upcoming episode?"

Chapter 1018: Petal Shower gets mad!

This had come about too suddenly!

It came so suddenly that even the King of Masked Singers program team was caught off guard!

Hu Fei immediately flew into a rage. "What the fuck is he thinking!"

Hou Ge said angrily, "What is Teacher Li Yu trying to do?"

Dafei could not understand either. "W-Why did he admit to it just like that? No one really said anything much at all! Everyone was just wildly guessing! No one could have been so sure that Sunflower was him!"

Xiao Lu's expression shifted. "Isn't he trying to make trouble then? We told them before the show went into production that the contestants are not allowed to expose their identities! Even if others can guess it, they can't admit to it until the moment they take off their mask. It's written in the contract and the contestant is obliged to cooperate. What the hell is Teacher Li trying to do!"

"This..."

"This will be tricky to handle!"

"How can we deal with this? We can't hide it anymore!"

"Can we say that his account was hacked? Would anyone believe that?"

"Aiyo, he's totally making trouble for us! We're about to start recording!"

"Is Sunflower really Li Yu?"

"Yes."

In reality, most of the program team staff did not know who Sunflower was. But after they saw the Weibo post and then looked

at how Hu Fei, Hou Ge, Dafei, and some others reacted to it, they knew that it had to be true. Sunflower in the Starlight was definitely the famous singer and movie star from Hong Kong who had been popular for many years, Li Yu!

Hu Fei yelled, "Is Sunflower here yet?"

"Not yet," the employee who was assigned to liaise with Sunflower replied.

Hu Fei immediately picked up his cell phone and contacted him.

The call went through, but it was Li Yu's assistant who picked up the phone.

Hu Fei bluntly said, "Assistant Xu, please inform Teacher Li Yu to delete his Weibo post. It's not too late to remedy the situation. Let's try to do whatever we can to turn this situation around as much as we can!"

Assistant Xu said, "But why?"

Hu Fei explained matter-of-factly, "Our show's selling point is that all of the contestants are masked. It's also stated in the contract that they are not allowed to reveal their identities to anyone. Otherwise, how can we still make the show? If everyone already knows about Teacher Li Yu's identity, what's the point of wearing a mask? Can we still produce the show that way? This will greatly affect the show's recording and broadcast. Besides, it's also unfair to the other contestants since with Teacher Li Yu's status and reputation in the music industry and with him being established, how can the other contestants possibly hope to compete against him? Would they even need to sing anymore? Teacher Li Yu might even get crowned as Masked King in every episode from now on!"

No one production would always be smooth sailing. There were always shows that encountered celebrity problems, people acting like a diva, finding fault with little things, or arguing. A lot of these

problems were unpredictable, but if they happened, it could usually be resolved with some communication. However, the program team and Li Yu's assistant were unable to come to an agreement.

After Assistant Xu listened to his speech, she said, "Director Hu, first things first, it was the fans who guessed Teacher Li Yu's identity and not us who actively volunteered the information. Teacher Li Yu has never been one to speak against his conscience or to ignore his fans. Even if you want him to lie, he won't be able to do it, which was the reason he admitted to it. Second, you said that it would affect the show, which I agree with. However, it is a positive effect here. With Teacher Li Yu's reputation, your show's viewership rating will definitely increase! So I don't understand what it is you're unhappy about?"

With that, Hu Fei flew into a rage!

What sort of pretense is this!

Do you think we're stupid?

Hu Fei said, "Don't you talk to me about that. Our program team decides how the show is designed and how the arrangements are made. Am I the director or are you the director? Delete that Weibo post immediately!"

Assistant Xu said, "I can't make that decision. I can only inform Teacher Li Yu about it, so I don't know how things will turn out. I'm hanging up then!"

Du du.

The line was suddenly cut!

Hu Fei's face darkened as he let out an angry huff.

Next to him, Hou Ge had heard everything. He said angrily, "If he doesn't want to cooperate, then let's just disqualify him!"

Dafei said, "Right, it was Li Yu who violated the contract first!"

Hu Fei looked at them and said, "How can we disqualify him? It's going to be such negative press that it'll certainly affect the viewership rating!"

"Isn't he getting too cocky?" Xiao Lu said, "I actually used to have quite a good impression of Teacher Li Yu! How can he do this! He's really being too disrespectful to the others like this!" She held up her cell phone's screen which was displaying Weibo and said, "Look, not only did Li Yu give away his identity, he even publicly asked for votes and for everyone to support him. Isn't that as good as asking the audience who will be here today to vote for him? This, this..."

Music Director Bai Yuanfei and the house band's members rushed over upon finding out.

When Bai Yuanfei heard what happened, he said, "The way I see it, we might as well cancel the recording today and just crown him as Masked King. We won't even need to record the show from now and just give him the trophy for the finals as well!" Bai Yuanfei did not care about Li Yu's status at all as he also was a very big name in the music industry. "The idea behind the show was to wear a mask, and compare who can sing better without caring for an individual's popularity or looks. Now that that Sunflower has revealed himself, he's even asking for votes! What competition is left!"

If Hu Fei had known this was going to happen, he would never have invited Li Yu onto the show!

Bai Yuanfei said, "Now that the other contestants have found out as well, I don't even know how to explain to them. Director Hu, why don't you talk to them instead."

Suddenly, Xiao Lu cried out, "There's an outcry on the Internet as well!"

Everyone's heart pounded as they jogged over to have a look.

...

Online.

There was a constant stream of news updates!

"Sunflower's real identity exposed!"

"Li Yu joins the King of Masked Singers!"

"King of Masked Singers' cut and dry champion—Sunflower in the Starlight!"

In the short span of an hour, just one single hour, the popularity of Sunflower in the Starlight on the official website had soared from third place to first!

Sunflower: 1.1 million votes!

The Clown: 670,000 votes!

Petal Shower: 540,000 votes!

Li Yu was already way out in the lead!

This was how popular he was. This was the result of his fans swarming in with their support!

Most important, there were many of Li Yu's good friends in the industry who helped him drum up support.

A famous movie star from Greater China said: "Haha, so Li Yu has gone to compete in King of Masked Singers, and he's actually Sunflower. He sings really well, so everyone, please give him your support."

Another celebrity said: "Teacher Li, I'm cheering you on. And here I was thinking about why Sunflower could sing so well. So it turned out that it was you. That completely answered my question. Since you didn't take it seriously the first two episodes, I believe you'll be serious in the third episode? Who can compete with you then? Remember to get crowned Masked King as much as possible!"

Quite a few celebrity friends voiced their solidarity for Li Yu.

And in turn, it created even greater support for Sunflower. His popularity votes kept rising!

Meanwhile.

Li Yu's fans started something.

"Go Teacher Li!"

"Love you to death!"

"What was wrong with the last two episodes? Why wasn't Li Yu crowned as Masked King?"

"There must be some conspiracy on the show, right?"

"Does the live audience there even know how to appreciate music? How could they crown The Clown as Masked King? Who is he to deserve that? Can he even compare to Teacher Li Yu?"

"Sunflower sang really well!"

"Right, The Clown, Petal Shower, and the others are nowhere good enough!"

"That Sunset Glow is nothing either. I don't even get it. How did she beat Teacher Li Yu by so many votes last week? That must have been because Teacher Li Yu did not take you guys seriously!"

"Hahaha. Now that we know Li Yu is Sunflower, do you guys think he'll become Masked King for every episode from now?"

"Definitely!"

"That's a must! Teacher Li Yu is incredibly popular!"

The opinions were totally skewed.

The people were also giving him their support.

Sunflower in the Starlight was garnering more and more support!

But this action of Li Yu's had created a negative impact on the King of Masked Singers. He was basically destroying the show that

they all had worked so hard to make! His action was all for his own selfish purposes in a bid to create an advantageous situation for himself. But for the show and the other contestants, what he did was full of malice!

...

But there were also people in the industry who were understanding of the situation.

At an entertainment company.

Fang Weihong found Zhang Yuanqi. "Sister Zhang, Sunflower is Li Yu?"

Zhang Yuanqi said, "I heard that it."

Fang Weihong spread her hands. "He admitted it himself? What does that mean?"

"It means that Old Li cannot afford to lose," Zhang Yuanqi replied.

A female celebrity from the same company who was beside Zhang Yuanqi added, "He did not get crowned as Masked King for two episodes now, so Li Yu couldn't bear that any longer and decided to expose himself in hopes that it would aid him in becoming the Masked King? But would the program team allow that? Ever since Teacher Li dropped off the A-list celebrity rankings, he has been a bit anxious to make himself famous again. He must intend to make use of this show to get back into the A-list? Since King of Masked Singers has gotten really popular, his team must have given him that idea, I guess?"

Fang Weihong shook her head. "Even if they know he's up to no good, there's nothing they can do. With his popularity, as long as he doesn't sing badly, he'll certainly become the Masked King. Unless the other contestants can come up with spectacularly outstanding performances or also give away their identity, there isn't really any way they can compete against him."

...

At Beijing Television.

In the dressing room.

Chen Guang frowned, "What's there left to do now that this has happened?"

Wang Zhuishu grunted, "Is he really Li Yu?"

Chen Yidong was having his makeup done by a makeup artist. "Perhaps it won't affect the show as much as we think? The live audience members might not necessarily be Li Yu's fans."

In the dressing room next to them.

Zhang Xia kept shaking her head. "Looks like we'll be welcoming a new Masked King today."

Amy said, "I really couldn't tell from Sunflower's singing that it was him!"

Backstage.

In a small conference room.

Hu Fei, Hou Ge, and the others had gathered the show's contestants except for Sunflower for a meeting.

When they all got there, Hu Fei immediately apologized, "Sorry about this, everyone. I did not handle this problem well, so let me first apologize."

Sunset Glow's light voice came from under her mask. "Are we still carrying on with the competition?"

Hu Fei sighed. "We'll still go ahead and record the show, that's for sure. We've also considered disqualifying Sunflower from the show. But the fallout of that would be too great, which we know the station will definitely not approve of."

A new replacement masked singer asked, "Then does that mean we deserve this?"

It was a man's voice. His stage name was Yesterday's Daylily and he had a yellow flower on his mask. It was both quite unique and odd at the same time.

Hou Ge quickly said, "That's not what we mean. We understand that this is very unfair to all of you as contestants, but..."

The other new replacement masked singer was a woman.

Her stage name was Spinach.

Spinach said, "Could we get Teacher Li Yu himself to back out from the competition then?"

Hu Fei said, "He's currently staying in his waiting room and completely unwilling to communicate with our people."

Yesterday's Daylily said, "Isn't he cheating this way?"

Dafei, influenced by Zhang Ye, was more straightforward with his speech. "Right, he's cheating! And we can't do anything about it!"

Petal Shower did not say anything.

Sunset Glow was just listening.

The Clown was drinking tea and thinking about something else.

Yesterday's Daylily said, "This is a variety show where we pit our talents against each other. It's either we win or we lose. Does he have to go that far with those underhanded methods? And he's even a big name A-lister?"

"Former A-lister," Spinach corrected. "He was knocked off the list by Teacher Zhang Ye."

Yesterday's Daylily snorted. "Serves him right. With his behavior, he can't compare to Zhang Ye at all. They're on totally different levels."

The two of them were not very big names in the entertainment circle, or might even be newcomers to the industry, but they talked

about this matter without any care or scruples.

Hu Fei apologized again, "I'm so sorry."

Spinach said, "Director Hu, it's not like this is your fault."

Yesterday's Daylily added, "We're just unhappy with his unscrupulous methods. We'll definitely record what we must, but his behavior has broken the rules of the show. Is there no way we can make him answer for it?"

Hu Fei did not say anything.

Petal Shower finally spoke up.

When she opened her mouth, what she said shocked everyone at the table. "The program team can't disqualify him? And Sunflower won't take the initiative to pull out of the competition?"

Hu Fei said, "Well..."

Petal Shower nodded and went on, "Alrighty then, why don't we just eliminate him instead?"

Everyone was dumbfounded!

Eliminate?

Get who eliminated?

Sunflower? Li Yu?

Damn, who can possibly do that? He's already revealed who he is! Even if he sings like shit, there will still be people in the audience voting for him!

Petal Shower tacked on, "When we draw lots later, I'll switch lots with whoever gets matched against Sunflower!" Petal Shower then got to her feet and left the conference room.

Sunset Glow looked at her and giggled.

Spinach gasped.

Yesterday's Daylily was too stunned to react.

Hou Ge, Hou Ge, Dafei, and the others looked at each other!

Eliminate Li Yu?

That would of course be the best way out!

But then, could that really happen? Would Petal Shower be able to do that? Could she really beat Li Yu who had already revealed himself? Fine, even if there was a one percent chance of that happening and Petal Shower really won, what about the round after that? Li Yu would surely still win in the elimination round! Who could stop him?

The Clown also chuckled. He was becoming more and more certain that Petal Shower was an old friend of his. Her temper was exactly what he liked!

Chapter 1019: Showdown!

At Beijing Television.

In the recording studio.

The audience gradually arrived and entered the studio.

Zhang Ye's parents and three sisters did not have to line up to get in. Xiao Lu had gone out to bring them in via the staff entrance. She politely invited them to the back row where it was less conspicuous. She even gave each of them a bottle of water and some snacks.

Zhang Ye's third sister said, "Thank you, Sister Lu."

Xiao Lu smiled and said, "You're welcome."

his second sister asked eagerly, "Sister Lu, is Sunflower really my Li Yu?"

"Li Yu is yours?" his eldest sister said in annoyance.

His second sister said, "But I'm his fan!"

Xiao Lu simply acknowledged, "It's him. Didn't he already say so himself?"

His second sister slapped her own thigh and exclaimed, "That's great! I didn't come here for nothing then!"

His third sister shouted, "I like Li Yu too! He's so handsome!"

His eldest sister said, "Didn't you say that you support The Clown?"

His third sister replied, "Hehe, I've defected."

Zhang Ye's father said, "Xiao Lu, go on and get back to your work. There's no need to stay here with us."

Xiao Lu said, "Alright then. You can find our staff anywhere, so if there's anything you need, just approach one of them." Just as she was about to leave, she spotted some people coming in and holding

LED placards with Li Yu's name on them.

She immediately went up to them and said, "Hey, you guys can't bring that in!"

Those girls were very unhappy to hear that.

"Why!"

"You can use the contestant's stage names, but not their real names. If the cameras capture it, it will mislead the audience."

"How would it mislead the audience? Everyone already knows that Sunflower is Brother Li Yu!"

"This won't do. You guys can't bring the signs in."

"Why are you being so troublesome!"

"If you're here to attend our show, please respect our show's rules. Otherwise, we have the right to deny entry to you."

"I'm going to bring it in. What about it? Who are you trying to scare!"

A squabble broke out.

Several employees and security guards immediately ran over to take control of the situation.

Just one post from Li Yu on his Weibo had caused so much trouble to the program team's work. A well-planned King of Masked Singers was now screwed up by him from the inside out!

...

In a backstage hallway.

The other program team staff also had a squabble, this one with Li Yu's assistant.

Hou Ge asked, "When are you all going to delete that Weibo post?"

Assistant Xu was being quite unreasonable about it. "Are you all

just going to keep harping on that?"

"You all have already affected the show from being recorded normally!" Dafei said angrily. "Just because of one person, the program team is now busy putting out fires. The other contestants were also badly affected by this. It's you who needs to get this clear. This show does not belong to you all, nor is it here to serve one person! Can you guys give some respect to others?"

Assistant Xu pointed at him and said, "Young man, don't speak to me in that angry tone. When I started out in the entertainment industry, you weren't even born yet. Do you think that the appearance fee that your show is paying us is a lot? Teacher Li only agreed to join the show because he thought you all were sincere. He doesn't usually participate in these Mainland China variety shows. The viewership that Teacher Li alone can bring to your show is greater than everyone else combined!"

"You broke the rules!"

"Teacher Li is helping your show get more popular!"

Their argument got fiercer and fiercer, with both sides' tempers flaring!

The employees on the program team felt a little grossed out by such behavior. They really could not accept that Li Yu could suggest that they were doing this for the good of King of Masked Singers and their program team when it was so blatantly obvious that he was just using them for his own gains by violating the rules with underhanded methods and asking for votes!

Wasn't this too hypocritical?

A former A-list celebrity would actually resort to something so despicable?

All of a sudden, Hu Fei came walking over from afar. "Don't bother trying to reason with them. It's about time to start recording, so let's get down to work!" He did not even look at

Assistant Xu as he led the others away.

Hou Ge said angrily, "Brother Hu, aren't they pushing it too far like that?"

One of the staff members said, "I just heard from my friend that Li Yu's team has been buying and running PR campaigns to help promote their cause. There were already several media outlets predicting that the overall champion of King of Masked Singers would be him. All those reports were due to them dumping money to create hype! They even bought and ran campaigns here at Beijing TV!"

It was no wonder the media had reacted so quickly!

It was no wonder the public opinion had switched over to Li Yu so one-sidedly!

Hu Fei told them, "I've already reported this to the station. From now on, Beijing TV will no longer have any dealings with Li Yu and his team!"

However, that would be something for the future.

But right now?

What were they going to do about the show right now?

Now that they had arrived at this point, they could no longer use any unseemly means to kick Li Yu off the show. They were forced to let him continue taking part in the recording. Even if he were to take the crown of Masked King for every episode from now, they would still have to continue recording the show as usual. Li Yu and his team had probably accounted for this, which was why they were so daring and unscrupulous in their methods!

...

The drawing of lots began.

The contestants were all sitting in their individual waiting rooms and watching their TVs.

The first person to draw lots was Sunflower in the Starlight. But after knocking on his door for a long time, no one responded until the female producer shouted from outside, "It's time for the drawing of lots!"

The door immediately opened with that.

Assistant Xu allowed her and the cameraman to go in.

The female producer was furious. So you people were inside all this time? Then why didn't you open the door just now? Why did you act like you didn't hear us? What kind of people are these!

Sunflower's mask was already on and he was no longer indifferent as before. When the cameraman came into the waiting room, Sunflower's laughter rang out. "Am I the first to draw lots?"

The female producer said, "Yes, please draw lots to decide your order of appearance."

"OK." Sunflower put his hand into the box and took out a ball.

Number 2!

It wasn't exactly a good or a bad position.

The female producer nodded, then turned around to leave without saying another word.

The other contestants could observe the entire process on their televisions.

Yesterday's Daylily let out a quiet curse.

Spinach's face sank. She started complaining incessantly to the employee assigned as her liaison. She was not worried as this part would not be broadcast.

Sunset Glow was silent.

Petal Shower was calmly drinking from her thermos, possibly something she had brought to soothe her throat. With the mask covering her face, any expressions she made could not be seen.

The Clown was just as calm.

Before long, the draws to decide the order was complete.

Number 1: Spinach.

Number 2: Sunflower in the Starlight.

Number 3: The Clown.

Number 4: Petal Shower.

Number 5: Sunflower.

Number 6: Yesterday's Daylily.

Spinach was on the verge of tears.

First to appear?

And her opponent was going to be Li Yu?

There was practically no chance of winning. For a moment, she even thought about not going onstage. What battle could be fought against Li Yu, an elite singer who had cheated?

However, someone pushed opened the door to her waiting room not long after.

It was someone wearing a flower mask.

Petal Shower extended the ball in her hand and said with a smile, "Wanna switch?"

Ah?

We're really switching?

Spinach was startled. She thought that Petal Shower had just been making a passing remark back in the conference room!

The camera linked to the internal transmission cut to the scene in this room.

The other contestants could all see this!

When Sunflower saw this, his eyes narrowed. What was the

meaning of this? Switching their order of appearance? Petal Shower intended to meet me in the first round? He found it a little funny and let out a laugh. He already knew about Petal Shower's singing. She could sing very well and her falsetto was very good too. However, she was at most as good as him. Now that he had revealed himself, and with the media talking about it, he knew that no one could beat him in this episode, in the next episode, and even the following episode. Even if the other contestants revealed themselves, he didn't feel that he would lose. He believed that he was the contestant with the best fanbase on this stage.

When the program team staff saw this, they did not say anything. There were no rules stating that the contestants could not change their order of appearance. They just needed the contestants themselves to agree to the change.

Spinach stood up quickly. "Big Sis, is this, is this really alright?"

Petal Shower nodded. "It is, although my number isn't that good either. Do you still want to switch?"

Petal Shower's number was matched against The Clown.

However, when Spinach heard that Petal Shower wanted to switch numbers, she immediately nodded furiously like a chick pecking at seeds. "Yes, yes, let's switch!"

"OK." On camera, Petal Shower and Spinach switched the little balls with their numbers.

Spinach said gratefully, "Thank you, Big Sis."

"You're welcome." Petal Shower twirled her hair and took large strides while walking away without any hesitation.

Everyone knew that Petal Shower had been angered. However, no one thought that she would win because they all felt that her opponent was too strong. Further, her opponent's identity had been revealed as well.

...

In The Clown's waiting room.

Han Qi was also very angry.

Today's main attraction should have been The Clown. Teacher Clown had taken the throne of the Masked King in two consecutive episodes and his popularity was the highest as well. In this third episode, he was initially the favorite to win. But with that stunt from Li Yu, the people's attention immediately shifted to him instead. No one cared about the other contestants anymore, whether it was The Clown, Petal Shower, or Sunset Glow. They had all become supporting characters to Little Yu, as everyone was shouting that Li Yu was the true Masked King!

Han Qi said aggrieved, "If Sunflower gets eliminated, that'll be such a face smacking!"

The Clown chuckled, "Yeah."

Still, Han Qi got discouraged again. "However, that's going to be impossible."

The Clown laughed. "It's not impossible."

Han Qi said, "Do you think that Teacher Petal Shower can win?"

The Clown thought for a moment before answering, "I don't know who she is, but I have an inkling of who she might be. If, and I'm saying if she is the person I think she is"—He then paused—"then the serious her will definitely win!"

Han Qi was surprised at this. "Really?"

Zhang Ye nodded.

But the prerequisite had to be that Petal Shower was that woman. Could it be her?

Zhang Ye stood up. "Come, recording hasn't started yet, so let's go to the studio to watch."

Han Qi said, "I heard that Petal Shower has made a last-minute

change for her choice of song. I wonder if the band can accommodate her."

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Then all the more reason we ought to cheer her on."

The other contestants had the same thoughts as him.

Sunset Glow, Spinach, and Yesterday's Daylily also went to the studio to watch. Faced with Li Yu's despicable behavior, they no longer cared about their victory or defeat against each other. They were all hoping for a miracle, that Petal Shower would beat Li Yu, then for Li Yu to make some mistakes in the elimination round and get eliminated as a result!

But what were the chances of that?

Ai, none of them wanted to think about it.

Chapter 1020: Petal Shower...surpasses the gods!

In the recording studio.

The recording had not started yet; the equipment was still being tested.

But in the audience, a lot of people were already starting to warm up.

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

Someone shouted!

As a result, a number of others joined in and shouted!

Zhang Ye's second and third sisters stood up and shouted along with the others. Before Sunflower in the Starlight even sang or appeared onstage, his popularity was already through the roof. There were also many in the audience who were not Li Yu's fans, but when they saw what was going on, they got influenced by the atmosphere and started anticipating him as well. They were beginning to think that Sunflower would definitely be the Masked King today and thought that none of the other contestants could compete against him.

"He's really popular."

"Right, that's Li Yu we are talking about!"

"Looks like Petal Shower, The Clown, and the others will just be filling in today."

"This former A-lister is indeed deserving of his reputation!"

"Why isn't it starting yet?!"

"Will Li Yu be singing Cantonese songs today?"

"If he sings in Cantonese, he'll have no match!"

Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, Yao Jiancai, and the other judges had already taken their seats at the guessing panel and were whispering among each other. Although they knew exactly what had happened, as well as how Li Yu was a sore loser, they were still very uncomfortable with his underhanded behavior that was as good as cheating. With the trouble that you stirred up, how can the others continue competing? Who can compete for the Masked King against you? Will there be any point to this competition? It might as well be an individual stage for you to perform on?

Yao Jiancai asked, "Have the lots been drawn already?"

Zhang Xia said, "Seems so."

Chen Yidong smiled and said, "The first to perform will be Spinach, followed by Sunflower."

Amy spoke up, "It's no longer that order. I heard that Petal Shower swapped places with Spinach. She'll be the first to perform now."

Chen Guang was startled. "Huh?"

The others did not know about this either.

Zhang Xia was taken aback. "What's happened?"

Amy coughed. "Seems like Petal Shower has gotten angry!"

Angry?

She initiated a challenge against Sunflower?

Indeed. With Li Yu's antics, who wouldn't get angry!

Chen Guang smiled wryly.

Zhang Xia said, "She wants to stop Sunflower from being crowned as the third episode's Masked King? By bringing him

down?"

Wang Zhuishu sighed, "Her courage is admirable, but Petal Shower's just about as talented as Sunflower. Although I've always liked her, I'm still not optimistic about her chances against Sunflower. Who can beat Sunflower today? Petal Shower won't be able to do it; The Clown's even further out of the equation." Then he turned to the camera and said, "Please edit this part out."

Suddenly, Dong Shanshan walked onto the stage with a smile after exchanging some quick words with the program team staff through her earpiece.

When the audience saw this, their cheers loudened!

"He's about to come on!"

"It's starting!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

Dong Shanshan said amid the cheering, "Welcome, everybody, to the King of Masked Singers brought to you by our sponsor, Bright Fruit Cocoa." She bent her knees and gave a playful curtsy to the audience. "I'm your host, Dong Shanshan."

Along with the explosive viewership ratings and the show becoming a hit, Dong Shanshan's popularity soared. But today, it seemed like no one was paying any attention to what clothes or glasses Dong Shanshan was wearing and what hairstyle she had. There was only one thing on everyone's mind: What song would Sunflower be singing and how he was going to get crowned Masked King!

After a string of advertising messages.

Dong Shanshan handed the stage over. "Then let's invite our first singer today—Petal Shower."

Petal Shower walked out onto the stage.

A few of the other contestants were standing in the corridor leading to the stage.

Spinach said, "Big Sis, all the best!"

Yesterday's Daylily said, "Please defeat Sunflower!"

Sunset Glow and The Clown were watching Petal Shower from behind.

Zhang Ye felt that Petal Shower had turned into a different person today. It felt like she was full of fighting spirit and that the anger suppressed within her was about to explode at any moment!

This was something to look forward to!

You had better not lose to him!

The audience still applauded for her.

"It's Petal Shower."

"Her singing is quite good."

"But it's only her falsetto that is good. How else can she compare to my Li Yu?"

"True that. Li Yu is a singing god in Greater China!"

"Yeah, there are only a handful of domestic singers who can be mentioned in the same breath as Li Yu. But I think it's unlikely that those people would come and compete on King of Masked Singers."

Zhang Ye spotted where his parents were sitting in the audience.

His father had a serious expression on his face.

His mother and sisters were very excited and shouting about something, but Zhang Ye was too far away to hear them clearly.

The lights dimmed.

The studio suddenly fell silent.

However, not everyone knew how to respect others. In the

middle of the audience, a few girls were waving their LED boards and actually shouting Li Yu's name when Petal Shower took to the stage!

"Brother Li Yu!"

"Sunflower, go for it!"

"Li Yu, I love you!"

Then they started to giggle and laugh.

Executive Director Hu Fei's expression darkened!

The band had no choice but to stop and delay the start of the musical accompaniment.

A program team employee immediately ran over and gave them a warning!

In the wings, Li Yu's assistant gave a slight smile as she didn't find anything wrong with it. Look at this! This is what Teacher Li Yu's popularity is all about. In his presence, it will be useless no matter who comes!

Zhang Xia frowned.

Amy kept shaking her head.

What kind of behavior was that? Their impressions of Li Yu got worse!

Spinach said angrily, "Aren't they trying to stir up trouble?"

Yesterday's Daylily said, "All this happened because of Li Yu's Weibo post!"

However, Zhang Ye could see that Petal Shower was not affected by this. She stood at center stage and closed her eyes. Then, all of a sudden, she raised her microphone! With the ruckus occurring in the audience and with the studio not exactly quiet, no one expected Petal Shower to start singing in a cappella!

"Have you ever seen the sun rise?

"It's warm and cozy.

"When one day you see someone singing into the sunrise, "Well, that might just be me."

In an instant, everyone in the studio fell silent!

Zhang Xia was taken aback!

Amy nearly jumped!

Wang Zhuishu was dumbfounded!

Waiting in the wings, Spinach, Sunset Glow, and Yesterday's Daylily were all dumbfounded!

The music played!

Petal Shower sang loudly.

"Have you ever seen the blue skies?

"They're clear and they're real.

"When one day you see someone laughing under the blue skies, "Well, that might just be me."

It was her real voice!

Petal Shower was using her real voice!

Even Sunflower, who was in his waiting room, was a little shocked!

This voice could truly be described as a keen blade. When the first word was sung, it stabbed right into the hearts of the audience, followed by thrust after thrust. This voice was very special!

And it was powerful!

It was a kind of power that most female singers did not possess!

Zhang Xia figured out who she was!

With this voice and singing style, there wasn't anybody else like her among the female singers in the music industry!

It was her!

She actually came to the show!

Everyone's hair stood on end as they got shocked. All of them thought that Petal Shower could only sing well in falsetto and that it was her greatest weapon. But when Petal Shower started singing with her real voice, many of them were unprepared for the shock!

How was that possible?

It turned out that her real voice was even better than her falsetto!

So Petal Shower had not been serious all this while!

She had just been "playing around" all along!

Even Li Yu's fans who were causing trouble earlier were dumbfounded by what they heard!

Petal Shower was singing higher and higher.

"Have you ever seen the dark clouds?

"They're thick and gloomy.

"When one day you see someone roaring under those dark clouds,
"Well, that might just be me."

The audience was so stunned their jaws dropped!

Zhang Ye's parents gasped!

Zhang Ye's three sisters went slack-jawed and forgot themselves!

How amazing!

This singing was unparalleled!

Zhang Ye closed his eyes and could feel goosebumps rising all over his arms!

Spinach and Yesterday's Daylily had been stunned for a while already!

Meanwhile, onstage, Petal Shower went another octave higher!

"Have you ever seen the sunset?

"It's dusky and quick to vanish.

"When one day you see someone shouting their last cry into the sunset, "Well, that might just be me.

"No, that's definitely me!"

Suddenly, her voice jumped another octave!

"Ah!"

"Oh, ah!"

"Oh!"

"Ah, oh!"

"Hey, ahh!"

"Oh, ahhh!"

Anger!

Tenacity!

Despair!

Petal Shower's cries took this song to its climax!

Many of the audience members could feel their bodies drenched with sweat!

It was spectacular!

It was wondrous!

Right then and there, the audience erupted!

Many of them stood up!

Many of them began to scream!

"That's Me" was not considered a popular song in the music industry but had blossomed because of Petal Shower's cover. She sang it in such a godly manner!

No one was a match for today's Petal Shower!

She had surpassed the gods with this song!

Chapter 1021: Petal Shower vs. Sunflower!

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

The excitement in the studio was hitting a fever pitch!

Many in the audience were shouting her name!

Petal Shower did not say anything. She just bowed and exited the stage.

Zhang Xia openly commented, "That was fantastic! There's only one such female singer like her in the music scene!"

Yao Jiancai quickly asked, "You've recognized her?"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "I'm quite certain of it."

Chen Yidong said, "But her voice doesn't sound familiar to me. Why can't I tell?"

Wang Zhuishu had also more or less guessed who she was. He was astonished. "She changed her vocal register on purpose and made her voice sound different." He looked to Zhang Xia and said, "Is it really her?"

Zhang Xia said in amusement, "Don't ask me, ask Old Chen."

Then, the judges looked over to Chen Guang.

Chen Guang scoffed and threw his hands up, saying, "I don't know anything. Why would you ask me?"

Amy said excitedly, "There's something to look forward to now! It's gonna be difficult to predict who wins and loses!"

Wang Zhuishu gave a wry smile and said, "Yeah, Petal Shower just showcased her specialty. If we considered just this

performance, no one could beat her except The Clown since he's always so unpredictable. Since no one can predict what he's going to do, we shouldn't count him out." The vague meaning to this was not spelled out clearly, but Petal Shower had turned in a heaven defying performance with this song. However, with Li Yu exposing himself and with so many fans supporting him, it would be difficult to predict how the audience would vote in the end.

In the corridor to the backstage.

Petal Shower was returning.

Spinach said excitedly, "Big Sis, y-you were amazing!"

Yesterday's Daylily said, "That was so cool! Senior Sis, could it be you?"

Petal Shower looked at him. "You are?"

Yesterday's Daylily said, "I'm a newcomer to the company. Uh, if I haven't misidentified you, we even dined together at Dongzhimen last month."

Petal Shower laughed. "Oh, it's you."

Yesterday's Daylily was shocked. "So it's really you then? Aiyo!"

But Spinach still could not recognize her. She hurriedly asked, "You are?"

Sunset Glow didn't seem to have figured it out either and was looking at her deep in thought.

The Clown did not say anything and ignored them. He already knew who she was, so he was even less inclined to speak as he was afraid that he would get recognized.

Onstage.

Dong Shanshan was saying, "Let's welcome our next singer—Sunflower in the Starlight!"

At this, the audience raised another racket!

"Ah?"

"Li Yu is next?"

"He's facing off against Petal Shower?"

"Aiyo, this is so exciting!"

"Uh, this..."

"Brother Li Yu, you can do it!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Let's go! Li Yu will definitely win!"

Many of Li Yu's fans were screaming their hearts out!

Sunflower walked onto the stage slowly as the crowd cheered him on. There was a sense of heaviness in his stride. After he came to a standstill, he took two deep breaths. Petal Shower's amazing performance had pressured him too much. He really had not expected that Petal Shower could sing a rather unknown song so well. It was an incredibly heaven defying performance and whoever took the stage afterwards to face her would have it quite hard. If this as before, Sunflower knew that he would have lost to her for sure. But it was different today, since everyone knew who he was. With his popularity, as long as he could perform up to par, he would definitely become the Masked King!

Sunflower was convinced of it.

Besides, he had chosen a song that would flatter him today!

The lights dimmed.

The music started playing.

The title of the song appeared on the display overhead the stage:
"Mother Said."

"It's a Mandarin song?"

"Why isn't he singing a Cantonese song?"

"Li Yu is definitely saving that for the finale! Haha!"

"It's almost Mother's Day, so this song is a good choice too!"

"But isn't it a rather niche song?"

"Anything that Li Yu sings is good. So what if it's niche? The song that Petal Shower sang was even more niche!"

The audience was getting quite enthusiastic.

However, when Spinach and Yesterday's Daylily saw the title of the song, they felt even more contempt for Li Yu. He had broken the rules, cheated by soliciting support, and even chose this sort of song to resonate with the audience on Mother's Day? He could really resort to any kind of method just to become the Masked King? How could he still have the cheek to sing a song about a mother's love!

Sunflower sang.

"Mother, oh mother.

"I've always kept your words in mind.

"I finally understand why you told me to be wary of those around me.

"Mother, oh mother.

"I've always kept your words in mind.

"You said that life is like an abyss that none of us can escape."

This was a very gloomy song.

It portrayed the singer's sense of confusion.

"Loneliness.

"I've gotten used to it.

"Hurt."

"I've suffered it.

"Can you tell me those words again?"

"Mother, where are you right now?"

In the studio, some people started to cry.

Zhang Ye's mother also felt a little touched and kept sniffing.

Zhang Xia, Amy, and the others nodded lightly. Disregarding everything else, Sunflower's singing was really one of the best in the music industry. The potency of his high notes was striking, and his technique was good. He could consciously control his voice to insert a slight sobbing tone, which made his singing particularly catchy!

The song ended.

Applause rang out through the studio!

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

A lot of young ladies were so moved by the song that they screamed as they shed tears!

As today was Mother's Day, this song had clearly resonated with the audience!

Sunflower was very satisfied with himself. He smiled to the audience while waving at them and bowed to show his appreciation.

Dong Shanshan went back onstage and invited Petal Shower back on as well.

Finally, the tensest moment arrived. The voting was about to take place!

Spinach watched, not blinking.

Yesterday's Daylily got butterflies in his stomach.

Hou Ge, Xiao Lu, Dafei, and others from the program team were all looking in that direction too. They were also looking forward to the results of the voting, but could not do anything to help. None of them wanted Sunflower to win and were wishing that he would get eliminated in this episode. Otherwise, if Sunflower really became Masked King for every future episode, King of Masked Singers would end up a personal stage for him to build up his popularity. That would defeat the purpose of having their contestants appear in masks!

But then, could Petal Shower really beat him?

Could she really beat Li Yu's popularity?

And so, the judges would play their roles to their greatest effect.

Zhang Xia said, "I like Petal Shower's performance. The only word that can describe her singing today is 'perfect!'"

Yao Jiancai commented, "Although Sunflower's song was nice to listen to and the sentiment behind it is just right, it's just too pessimistic and depressing. I also prefer Petal Shower's 'That's Me,' especially that last verse with the 'last cry.' It was the best! To be honest, I've never heard someone who can sing this well!"

Amy expressed, "Comparing the two of them, Petal Shower's performance was the more outstanding one today."

The judges unanimously preferred Petal Shower.

Petal Shower nodded in thanks.

Sunflower remained silent. He did not seem to care what the judges were saying as he still did not think that he would lose, so he let them say whatever they wanted.

However, when the voting began, Sunflower's expression finally changed!

The moment it started, Petal Shower went into the lead!

It was not much, just seven votes!

Li Yu's fans in the audience were infuriated!

"What the heck!"

"Do you people even understand music?"

"Give your votes to Li Yu!"

"Give them all to Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"He should be the Masked King!"

Li Yu's fans flared up as his vote count soared!

Sunflower overtook Petal Shower and went into the lead by more than 20 votes!

The program team staff looked peeved!

Spinach and Yesterday's Daylily stamped their feet in frustration!

The judges' comments were very professional. To be fair, Petal Shower's singing was really leaps and bounds better than Sunflower's. But due to Li Yu's despicable tricks, many of those present in the studio disregarded the point of voting. They no longer cared about the singing and whether the song performed was good. Some of these audience members were even explicitly supporting the person and not the performed piece. No matter what Li Yu sang, they would give their votes to him!

Sunflower looked at the tallies and smiled.

Petal Shower did not even turn around to look at the votes.

Fortunately, there were still plenty of people in the audience who were rational.

Zhang Ye's eldest younger sister said, "I'm definitely voting for Petal Shower!"

His father said, "Right."

His mother disagreed, "But Sunflower sang very well."

His third sister said, "I didn't like Li Yu's song as it was too pessimistic. Why does it paint everything in life so darkly? Why must we be cautious of the people around us? Although I like Li Yu, I still think that Petal Shower sang better today!"

The burst of votes from Li Yu's fans was only temporary. For that moment, a lot of people gave their votes to Li Yu, but it could not gather enough momentum!

Petal Shower had sung too godly!

She was so amazing that some of Li Yu's not terribly diehard fans defected and voted for Petal Shower instead!

Both their tallies kept rising!

Finally, the results were out!

Dong Shanshan said, "I hereby announce that the winner is—Petal Shower!"

Petal Shower: 252 votes!

Sunflower: 248 votes!

It was only a difference of 4 votes!

Petal Shower had won!

Chapter 1022: 'Life's More Than the Grind'!

This result shocked many people!

Sunflower's expression darkened!

Assistant Xu was dumbfounded!

Spinach was so astonished that she nearly screamed out loud!

Yesterday's Daylily and the employees on the Beijing Television program team nearly laughed out loud!

She won?

She really won!

What a release! This was a great way to vent their anger!

"Li Yu lost?"

"That's impossible!"

"Who on earth is Petal Shower!"

"Sunflower revealed himself, yet he still couldn't win?"

"Why didn't he sing a Cantonese song!"

"If he sang a Cantonese song that he's skilled at, he would definitely have won!"

"Yeah, Sunflower probably intended to save that song for the battle for the Masked King? How could he have known that he would run into a freak like Petal Shower! And make an early exit?"

"It's over! Li Yu can't fight for the crown of the Masked King in this episode!"

"He'll definitely make it through the elimination round, though, so he has to wait until the next episode."

"Ai, he underestimated his opponents!"

"But there's really nothing to argue over about this win by Petal Shower!"

"If Li Yu had sung a Cantonese song, Petal Shower probably wouldn't have won."

A lot of the audience members were giving their objective evaluation of the outcome.

But a lot of Li Yu's fans did not accept this result.

"What the heck!"

"There's a conspiracy!"

"Do they even understand music? How did they vote?"

"It was clear that Li Yu sang better! Why does it seem like no one understood that?"

"Just like Teacher Li Yu had sung in his song, life really is like an abyss. We're surrounded by so much darkness that even if we try our hardest, no one gives us any recognition!"

"I'm pissed off!"

"How could Petal Shower win?"

"My heart aches for Brother Li Yu!"

Seeing that Li Yu had lost, some of his female fans were heartbroken for him and crying!

Crestfallen, Sunflower left the stage in a terrible mood!

A few of the judges looked at each other, finding it rather funny.

Executive Director Hu Fei felt very happy!

Deliberately planning for this to happen? To checkmate everyone? And even spending money on a PR campaign in the media? And openly soliciting votes on Weibo? But as it stood?

He had lost in the first round!

This was truly a slap to the face!

This was truly painful!

Zhang Ye laughed. That was beautifully done. Leave the rest to

me.

The uproar in the studio lasted for five minutes.

After Dong Shanshan finally maintained a semblance order, she said, "Let's welcome the next contestant—The Clown."

The Clown was the third to appear and was matched up against Spinach.

This dragged everyone's attention back to the stage.

Petal Shower did not return to her waiting room. She stood with Spinach, Yesterday's Daylily, and the others in the wings and waited to see The Clown's live performance. They were all very curious about this mysterious singer who had taken the throne of the Masked King twice before, curious about his unguessable identity. There was not even a candidate they could think of. It was as though this godly person had suddenly appeared out of nowhere in the music industry, so much so that even Petal Shower dreaded him a great deal.

Amy clapped. "It's The Clown's turn!"

Yao Jiancai had been looking forward to this and said, "Is he going to sing yet another original?"

"I'm not sure." Zhang Xia stared at the lyrics teleprompter but did not yet see the title of the song displayed.

The audience looked to the stage.

Spinach was nervously observing The Clown.

The Clown walked over to the house band and exchanged a word with them.

Bai Yuanfei was taken aback. "You're really going to choose this song to perform?"

The Clown gave a determined, affirmative grunt.

The guitarist said, "This song is too monotone and isn't a good

choice."

The Clown smiled. "It's fine. I'm choosing it."

The house band replied, "OK."

This song was one of the four songs Zhang Ye had chosen. Before this, he was still undecided on which to perform, but he could now make a decision.

Looking at the stage.

Zhang Ye's mother exclaimed in surprise.

His father turned to her. "What's the matter?"

His mother pointed at The Clown. "Nothing much, but Little Ye also seems to have that pair of shoes he's wearing."

His father said, "Oh, really? I hadn't noticed."

His mother said, "I bought them for our son. They're pretty expensive."

His second sister added, "Of course, celebrities usually wear brand name stuff since they're all loaded."

None of them cared, nor did they think anything of it.

The studio quieted.

One second.

Two seconds.

The lights slowly dimmed.

A nursery rhyme-esque melody played by a harmonica floated into the air.

Zhang Ye stood at center stage with his eyes closed and smiled. He did not know why he was smiling. Thinking about Sunflower's "Mother Said," which Zhang Ye had heard for the first time, he could honestly say that he really didn't like the song. Life was an abyss? Life was about suffering? Be wary of others? Get used to

loneliness?

Why was it like that?

This wasn't what life should be about.

This isn't what a mother's love should be like.

At least, my mother's love is not like this.

Zhang Ye thought of how his mother was stingy, long-winded, and loved bragging. He would never forget his first day at university when his mother went with him to report to the campus. She carried so many big and small suitcases along with her while looking for Zhang Ye's dorm room with him and even helped him fit the bed sheets, pillowcase, and blankets. When she realized that the bed sheets were not properly fitted, she took them off and fit them again.

After that, his mother's eyes inexplicably reddened.

Zhang Ye had attended Media College in Beijing and he would be back home every weekend. It wasn't actually that bad since he was allowed to go home. Even Zhang Ye himself was looking forward to his time away from home and did not feel unsettled by having to stay away from home for the first time in his life.

But his mother very nearly cried.

Study hard—she left after saying those words.

At that time, Zhang Ye felt that his mother was just making a fuss.

Zhang Ye did not understand what his mother had felt even when he was in his final year at university. But just now, as he stood on this stage, realization dawned on him. Zhang Ye understood what had gone through his mother's mind at the time and understood what his mother had meant by "study hard."

The guitar strummed.

It drifted through the air with a youthful spirit.

Zhang Ye opened his eyes and sang in a [gentle voice](#) that resonated through the studio.

"Mother sat at the door,

"Humming to flowers and kids she'd cared for.

"Although it has been years,

"I still recall her tears.

"Those dark and gloomy years,

"That tenacity and those fears.

"At the door before departing,

"Mom looked into my eyes, imparting."

The drums kicked in.

Zhang Ye sang.

"Life's about more than just the grind; poetry and distant fields we can find.

"You were born into this world with bare hands; to strive for that sea you cast off from lands."

In the audience, his mother was stunned!

The judges were stunned!

The audience was stunned!

You're singing a song related to your mother as well?

Life's about more than just the grind? Poetry and distant fields we can find?

These lyrics...

His third sister put a hand over her mouth. "Oh my god!"

His eldest sister said excitedly, "This song is so beautiful! How can this type of song exist!"

During the rehearsal, The Clown had just hummed through it. So

the house band was hearing The Clown sing the lyrics for the first time as well. They were instantly moved!

The Clown smiled.

"She sat across from me,

"Head down, bidding farewell.

"Although it has been years,

"I still recall her tears.

"Times of those joyful beams,

"Times of those vows and dreams.

"Parting beside the street,

"She hugged me tight and said,

"Life's about more than just the grind; poetry and distant fields we can find.

"You were born into this world with bare hands; to strive for that sea you cast off from lands."

His mother's eyes suddenly reddened!

Amy looked deeply touched!

Zhang Xia was affected by the images conjured by the song!

An audience member was half-listening to it when all of a sudden, she covered her mouth and started crying. She had been brought back to her teenage years when she insisted on coming to the capital city to chase her dreams. Her father had strongly disagreed and locked her up at home. Not even a hunger strike could change his mind. But she would never forget when her mother quietly unlocked her door one night and handed her an already packed suitcase along with 2,000 yuan. She told her, "Your dad fell asleep, so hurry and leave. If you don't make it in Beijing, just come home."

This was what a mother was!

The greatest person in the world!

The Clown had a very gentle tone that was not intended to show off his singing. It was as though he were reading a story, narrating at an appropriate clip. But it was exactly this plain singing, coupled with those poetic lyrics, that somehow managed to bowl them over and make their hearts flutter a bit!

The story was still moving forward.

The Clown was still singing.

"I've traveled far and alone."

"Now I have a kid of my own."

"He is growing day by day,

"And will leave home someday."

"Watching as he grows up,

"Watching him toughen and look back."

"I know that there will be a day,

"I'll smile to him and say."

All of a sudden, The Clown jumped octaves.

"Life's about more than just the grind; poetry and distant fields we can find."

"You were born into this world with bare hands; to strive for that sea you cast off from lands."

"Life's about more than just the grind; poetry and distant fields we can find."

"You were born into this world with bare hands; to strive for that sea you cast off from lands!"

Faith.

Hope.

Dreams.

Love.

Legacy.

They were all mentioned in this song!

Spinach smiled bitterly.

It was her turn next, but could she win?

With this guy singing this song, how could she possibly win!

Many people were even more astonished because they had thought that Sunflower's defeat by Petal Shower was already quite face-smacking, but none of them expected for The Clown to take the stage after that and give another vicious faceslap! Sunflower's song had been about life's abyss, darkness, loneliness, and hurt. But The Clown had outright rejected him by attacking him with his song!

Life's about more than just the grind!

Poetry and distant lands we can find!

Chapter 1023: The Clown admits defeat!

The music stopped.

The song ended.

The Clown bowed and turned to walk off the stage.

There wasn't any screaming in the studio nor the explosive atmosphere like after Petal Shower had performed. There wasn't even any shouting like after Sunflower in the Starlight's performance. This was a reflective song, one that was not sung in hopes of competing on this stage. However, a lot of people in the audience suddenly started to silently stand up.

One clap.

Two claps.

Han Qi was clapping as she wiped away her tears!

Music Director Bai Yuanfei was clapping with a smile on his face!

Hu Fei, Hou Ge, Dafei, Yao Jiancai, Amy, Chen Guang, Zhang Xia, and everyone else were clapping!

It became a round of constant applause that didn't stop for a long time!

Some of their eyes were brimming with tears.

While some of them had a sad look in their eyes.

This song had given them such a swirl of emotions that it was very difficult to speak or scream to express what they were feeling inside. Those who had similar experiences were moved by the song, whereas those who hadn't gone through such a stage in life and had been affected by Sunflower's gloomy and dark "Mother Said" were now baptized by this "Life' More Than the Grind." They felt like their lives were suddenly brightened by an influx of indescribable emotions that felt very comforting.

"The Clown is so great!"

"I like him, I like him so much!"

"Me too! His songs are just so full of feeling!"

"But this song was neither intense nor lively. Will others be able to understand it?"

"Uh, this song is not exactly suitable for a competition and was not a good choice."

"I don't care about others. In any case, I understood it and I think it's wonderful!"

"I can't use words to describe how much I love The Clown. In my eyes, he poured in every ounce of his emotions into singing this song!"

The audience was chattering away.

A wry smile hung from Chen Guang's lips. "He's sung so many songs, but no one can identify him from his voice?"

Zhang Xia shook her head. "I can't think of who he might be!"

Amy said irritated, "I can't tell from his voice either!"

Yao Jiancai spread his hands and said with a laugh, "If you people from the music industry can't identify him, then I definitely can't guess who he is."

There were no deafening high notes.

There was nothing uncontrolled in his technique.

The Clown used his extremely magnetic voice to tell a story without any hint of showing off.

This song was so advanced!

This singing was so advanced!

["Life's More Than the Grind"](#) was performed by Xu Wei in Zhang Ye's previous world and Gao Xiaosong was the songwriter, with

both the melody and lyrics written by him. Zhang Ye had not planned on singing this on today's stage and had prepared it as a backup piece. But when he took the stage, he could not suppress the thought of it. He just suddenly wanted to sing this song, so he sang it.

In the waiting area.

Petal Shower, Spinach, and the others were all there.

As the applause did not stop, Dong Shanshan did not invite the next singer onstage even though she was already there herself. She was simply waiting for the atmosphere to calm down.

The Clown returned to the waiting area.

Petal Shower looked deep into his eyes. "That was amazing."

The Clown changed his vocal register and said, "Thank you."

Sunset Glow looked at him. "I really liked that song. Can I cover it?"

The Clown laughed and said, "Sure."

Spinach smiled bitterly. "You, you guys are too good! Godly seniors, please lead the way for us!"

Yesterday's Daylily asked, "Teacher Clown, which big name in the industry are you?"

The Clown chuckled. "I'm just a newbie in the music industry." He really wasn't lying.

But how could others believe him? In fact, they were floored!

A newbie?

Stop pretending already!

To Spinach and Yesterday's Daylily, The Clown and Petal Shower both belonged to the type of singers with elite singing skills, even if they had completely different singing styles. It was very difficult to judge who was better and more of a case of beauty being in the eye

of the beholder. But compared to themselves, these two teachers would definitely annihilate them in a singing competition.

Spinach pulled a long face and said, "I don't want to go out on stage anymore."

The Clown smiled and said, "Sing well and you're sure to win."

Spinach said, "Please don't try to comfort me. Who can beat you after that song?"

Yesterday's Daylily suddenly said in amusement, "Teacher Clown's song was such a divine stab!" He could not prevent himself from bursting into laughter. "Aiyo, I'm dying of laughter!"

Spinach, Sunset Glow, and Petal Shower burst into laughter as well.

Indeed. This stab was really too vicious!

A coincidence?

Bullshit! What coincidence?

How could there be such a coincidence? Sunflower had just finished singing a song about how life was dark and a grind, and then you came along and sang about how life's more than just the grind. The Clown must have definitely done this on purpose!

Li Yu is probably in his waiting room, his face green with anger!

"Teacher Petal Shower is also amazing!"

"Yeah, she straight up prevented Li Yu from advancing to the next round!"

"Hai, but Li Yu will still be able to make a comeback next episode."

"Yes, he won't be stopped in the elimination round."

"If he sings a Cantonese song, then..."

"Yeah, it's difficult to say who'll end up as the eventual winner if that happens."

"Li Yu is really good at Cantonese songs."

The masked singers were on quite friendly terms as they chatted. Li Yu's backstabbing had led the other contestants to become wholly united against him and they grew close as a result.

...

Onstage.

The audience was still applauding.

Dong Shanshan had no other choice but to smile and speak into the microphone, "Shall I tell everyone a joke?"

Only then did the applause lessen.

Dong Shanshan said, "There was once a host who wanted to tell a joke to her audience, but the audience did not laugh. That's all. That's the joke, so let's welcome our next contestant—Spinach!"

The audience was tickled.

"Pfft!"

"What a bad joke!"

"How is that a joke!"

"Hahahaha!"

But with that interruption from Dong Shanshan, the audience was drawn away from the emotions brought on by the song.

Spinach took a deep breath. "I'm going on!"

The Clown said, "Break a leg."

Yesterday's Daylily looked at her with sympathetic eyes. "Just do your best."

Spinach forced a smile and quickly walked onto the stage.

The music started.

The melody was very familiar.

When Zhang Ye heard it, he got slightly surprised and then smiled.

Spinach sang softly.

"To my dear Mom and Dad. How are you two?

"Have you been busy working? Are you healthy?

"I'm in Beijing, it's pretty good.

"Mom and Dad, don't you worry for me."

It was "A Letter to Home," which Zhang Ye had sung at Beijing Television's Spring Festival Gala.

The audience was stunned!

She was singing really well!

She was singing it incredibly well!

Zhang Ye, Yesterday's Daylily, and the others had not expected that Spinach could sing so well either. Her singing style was very silky, her crystal-clear voice sounding fantastical. When she sang "A Letter to Home," it felt completely different from Zhang Ye's version. It carried a unique flavor!

After the song was over, some of the audience were in tears.

Soon after, The Clown was invited back onstage.

Dong Shanshan smiled. "Let's first have the guessing panel of judges say a few words."

Chen Yidong was the first to speak. "Spinach's singing and voice were quite good. The emotions were on point and I was moved when she sang that last part of the song. But compared to The Clown, she's probably not at his level yet."

Spinach humbly bowed. "Thank you, Teacher."

Zhang Xia asked, "Spinach, have we ever worked together?"

Spinach coughed. "Yes."

The audience gasped.

Zhang Xia immediately probed further. "Was it at that gala last year?"

Gala?

What gala?

Nobody could understand what she meant.

Spinach smirked and said, "The director isn't letting me answer."

"Alright, I get it." Zhang Xia said, amused, "So it really is you. No wonder you can sing this well."

But Chen Guang was not in the know. "Who is she?"

Amy said, "Grandma Zhang, please tell us."

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "I can't say who she is aloud, but I can give you a hint. This young lady is not considered as someone from the music industry or someone with a musical background." Then she told Spinach, "You sang very well, and us two are like old friends. But if I had to vote, I would still vote for The Clown. Please don't blame Grandma."

Spinach laughed and said, "It's fine, Grandma Zhang."

The judges' attitudes were very obvious.

The audience felt the same.

Spinach was indeed not bad. She could sing well, her song was good, and her singing touched people. But The Clown's song had already reached a level where it couldn't be distinguished between good or bad. He had sung to another plane!

...

In the waiting room.

Sunflower watched the television, utterly uninterested in the results. He knew that The Clown would definitely win. In the next round, Sunset Glow was certain to get through as well. Then only

he, Spinach, and Yesterday's Daylily would be left to compete in the elimination round. Since it came down to that, he knew that he would still be able to win even without singing. Therefore, he was not worried at all. He was in a terrible mood right now and had not expected that things would turn out this way, nor that Petal Shower would perform so exceedingly well.

He had not managed to fight for the position of Masked King today!

Then he'd just have to leave it for the next episode!

Or the episode after that!

In any case, he still had plenty of future chances. He would stop underestimating his opponents' talent in the future and sing the Cantonese songs he was best at to sweep everyone aside!

...

In the studio.

Dong Shanshan nodded and said, "Alright, please get ready to vote."

There wasn't much suspense to the voting, though.

The Clown was going to win this for sure.

In the wings, Hu Fei started talking with his coworkers.

Dafei asked, "Brother Hu, do you think that Spinach can eliminate Sunflower?"

Hu Fei shook his head. "There's no chance of that."

Hou Ge added, "Even if Spinach excels, she's still not a match for Li Yu. Moreover, there are so many Li Yu's fans in the studio today."

Xiao Lu said, "Yeah, don't expect too much from Spinach and Yesterday's Daylily. Even if Sunset Glow somehow loses and goes into the elimination round, she still won't be a match for Li Yu. He

is a tenor singer and his next song will definitely be a Cantonese one. Even if Petal Shower went up against him again, I think it would still be difficult to beat him!"

Han Qi came over. "Then wouldn't Sunflower still act smug onstage tomorrow? He's so annoying!"

Dafei said, "Then what should we do? Petal Shower defeating Li Yu even when he had all the advantage was already a miracle. Other than Petal Shower and The Clown, who amongst the other contestants can stop him?"

But a voice shocked everyone!

The Clown suddenly spoke up and his words dumbfounded everyone in the studio!

"Please wait a moment." The Clown lifted his microphone as he said with a chuckle, "Spinach sang admirably this round. If the voting begins, I'm afraid that the votes would be too disproportionate and I would lose badly. So why don't we skip the vote and I admit defeat instead!" Then he looked at Dong Shanshan and asked, "I am allowed to admit defeat, right?"

Dong Shanshan was stunned!

Hu Fei was shocked!

Zhang Xia, Yao Jiancai, and the other judges were surprised!

In the waiting room, the look on Li Yu's face became one of thunder!

The audience exclaimed!

Han Qi was dumbfounded!

Petal Shower and Sunset Glow were stunned!

Spinach nearly fainted on the spot!

Admit defeat?

You're admitting defeat?

A second later, realization dawned on many people!

He was doing this on purpose!

He was definitely doing this on purpose!

Petal Shower had gotten rid of Li Yu in the first round!

And now, The Clown wanted to follow up on it by taking him on in the elimination round!?

Dammit!

Have you gone crazy?

Isn't this as good as going for broke?

Chapter 1024: A sudden turn of events!

On Weibo.

Li Yu's fans were all laughing happily.

"Have they finished recording the show yet?"

"I have no idea."

"Brother Li Yu is definitely going to be the Masked King."

"Right, recording might have already ended."

"Just based on Teacher Li Yu's reputation alone, who can best him?"

"Ah, I really wanted to attend the recording and listen to Brother Li Yu sing!"

The media was still plugging this news.

Many of the PR campaigns that Li Yu's team had spent money on were still bombarding the public space with news.

"No suspense as to who will become the third episode's Masked King!"

"Li Yu: The darling of the music industry!"

"Sunflower has been holding back in the competition all this time!"

"A Sunflower that sings Cantonese songs is unbeatable!"

"Only a matter of time before Li Yu returns to the A-list!"

"Sunflower's popularity to usher in a career high if he becomes grand champion of King of Masked Singers!"

The speculation in the outside world was getting intense.

Even the onlookers started to believe that Li Yu would definitely become this episode's Masked King.

But unbeknownst to them, Li Yu had already lost the right to

compete in the third episode's battle for the Masked King. Neither did they know that the recording studio was currently in chaos!

...

At the studio.

The Clown's words had shocked everyone!

Dong Shanshan forced herself to calm down and said, "You want to admit defeat?"

The Clown nodded. "That's right."

Dong Shanshan asked, "Are you sure?"

The Clown said, "I'm quite sure."

"There aren't any rules about this, so I can't make the decision. I'll need to ask the program team." Dong Shanshan immediately looked to Hu Fei and the others in the wings.

Many of the audience members stood up looking confused.

"Why is he admitting defeat?"

"Afraid that you'll lose by too much? You must mean to say that you're afraid you'll win by too much!"

"Why did The Clown do that?"

"He clearly sang really well!"

"This song can easily sweep Spinach aside!"

"Yeah, The Clown would definitely have won. So why did he admit defeat?"

"Didn't all the judges only have good things to say about him?"

"This fellow must have gone crazy, right?"

"If he admits defeat now, he'll have to go into the elimination round and take on Sunflower. Sunflower will definitely sing a Cantonese song, and then wouldn't The Clown get eliminated? Then he'll have to take off his mask!"

"Yeah. Although I also want to know who The Clown is, it's just the third episode. I don't wish for him to be eliminated so early in the competition!"

His mother was also stunned. "What's going on?"

His eldest young sister said anxiously, "I don't know."

A lot of people were confused by what was going on.

But some people understood exactly what was going on.

Hu Fei and the others could vaguely guess what The Clown was thinking. When The Clown decided to admit defeat, it set their pulses racing with excitement!

Li Yu had become a ticking time bomb that could bring everyone down with him. The program team could not wait to get rid of this cancerous tumor. But during their earlier discussion, they had concluded that among all the contestants, only Petal Shower and The Clown had a chance to put up a fight against him and that it was impossible for the others to win. Even though Petal Shower's and The Clown's chances of winning were very slim, with Petal Shower performing exceedingly well and eliminating Sunflower in the first round, the program team staff thought that this was the best possible outcome and a miracle as well. They had not expected that anyone would be able to kick him out of the competition in the upcoming elimination round.

But The Clown came forward!

No one could have known this would happen!

Hou Ge said excitedly, "Teacher Clown!"

Dafei stammered, "This, this..."

Xiao Lu was extremely touched. "How righteous! Teacher Clown has such strong sense of justice!"

Han Qi was panicking. "No! He absolutely must not do that!"

Another staff member said, "What if The Clown loses? Then..."

"He's planning for it to be a deathmatch!"

"We're not talking about the first round here! This is the elimination round! Whoever loses will get eliminated!"

"He's going all out!"

"The Clown is quite interesting!"

"How brave would you need to be to do that?"

"Fucking hell! This is super exciting!"

"Director Hu, what should we do?"

"Director Hu, everyone is waiting. How are we going to handle this?"

The program team staff congregated and were in complete disarray!

On the stage.

Spinach experienced the most complicated of feelings as she finally understood what The Clown meant when he said "Sing well and you're sure to win" before her turn to take the stage. At the time, she thought that The Clown was just comforting and encouraging her as he was afraid that she would be too nervous. But she understood now that even before she'd gone onstage, The Clown planned to concede the match. The Clown knew that Spinach was definitely not a match for Li Yu, so he wanted to take him on by himself!

Before the competition started, Petal Shower had said it.

Why not just stop Li Yu from advancing to the battle for the Masked King?

Why not just get Li Yu eliminated from the show?

No one took her words seriously then. But now, they were getting closer and closer to realizing those words, especially after The Clown announced that he would concede his match!

They've gone mad!

One was Petal Shower, who clearly knew that her opponent was Li Yu, but still switched spots with Spinach!

The other was The Clown, who clearly knew that Li Yu would sing a Cantonese song to the best of his abilities in the elimination round, yet still took the risk of possibly revealing his identity by admitting defeat so that he could knock Li Yu out in the elimination round!

These two were lunatics!

These were two lunatics who had very strong self-confidence and were fearless!

Spinach quickly said, "Teacher, I..."

The Clown waved it off and laughed.

Dong Shanshan communicated through her earpiece, "Alright, alright, I understand."

The program team staff had come to a decision.

At once, everyone's eyes landed on Dong Shanshan.

Amy was so anxious she was already standing. Honestly, she really liked The Clown a lot and did not wish for him to go up against Li Yu. If that were to happen, The Clown would be more or less done for!

Li Yu's assistant was staring from the wings.

Dong Shanshan spoke, "The program team has decided: They will allow the contestant to admit defeat."

Everyone flew into an uproar!

The audience blew up!

Dong Shanshan announced, "I hereby announce that the winner of this match is—Spinach!"

No one applauded.

Seeing this, The Clown started clapping very hard and gave Spinach a thumbs up. Then he raised his hands and gestured for the crowd to give her their applause.

With that, applause started to ring out in the audience.

Spinach hurriedly bowed to give her thanks.

However, Li Yu's assistant could not accept this!

Assistant Xu went straight to Hu Fei and the program team and sought them out. "What is the meaning of this? Does the show have a rule about being allowed to admit defeat? Isn't this messing things up? He clearly did that on purpose!"

Hu Fei looked at her. "Are you the director?"

Assistant Xu choked.

Hu Fei shouted, "This is our Beijing TV show! Do I need you to tell me what to do?"

Li Yu and his team's arrogance had infuriated the program team staff beyond recognition. It was our show to begin with! You people breached the contract by taking the liberty of revealing who he was, broke the rules, used underhanded methods to ask for votes, and paid for PR campaigns! Yet you still have the balls to accuse us of messing things up? Breaking the rules?

Fuck off!

Who the fuck do you think you are!

Did you think this show belongs to you? That you could do whatever you liked?

Assistant Xu was also angered and wanted to argue with them!

Hou Ge called over the security guards. "Throw her out of here!"

Dafei said, "Who let this person in? This is a workplace for our employees and restricted for non-staff. Guard this place closely in the future and don't just let any Tom, Dick, or Harry enter!"

Tom, Dick, or Harry?

I'm Li Yu's assistant!

In the music industry, who doesn't talk to me courteously and politely?

Assistant Xu was furious. "Great, great, just watch!"

Xiao Lu spit out, "What an asshole you are!"

Assistant Xu said angrily, "Who are you insulting?"

Xiao Lu pointed at the assistant's nose and said, "I'm insulting you!"

What sort of a television station was this?

What sort of a program team was this?

Assistant Xu yelled, "You're going to speak to me like this? Ah? Do you believe I won't expose you to the media!"

Xiao Lu stalked toward her like a little tigress and said, "Go ahead and expose us! Do it!"

Dafei sneered, "You're fortunate that Teacher Zhang Ye is not around today. If he were around, with that temperament of his, you'd probably leave this place on a stretcher!"

They were all Zhang Ye's old colleagues. In fact, their behavior and temperament were not like this in the past. Even if they were faced with some annoyance, they wouldn't have lambasted someone like they had now. Further, this person was even a former A-listers' assistant. It was only after they had been around Zhang Ye for a long time that they had changed a fair bit, so it was inevitable that they got influenced by some of Zhang Ye's bad habits. They might not have even been aware of this themselves.

So perhaps this was where Zhang Ye's unique charms lay.

Chapter 1025: 'I Really Hate You'?

In the waiting area.

As soon as The Clown and Spinach came back, they were surrounded by Yesterday's Daylily, Petal Shower, and Sunset Glow.

Petal Shower said in shock, "Are you serious?"

The Clown laughed. "Yeah."

Sunset Glow gasped. "How sure are you that you can win?"

The Clown shook his head. "I don't know."

"You don't know but you still did that?" Yesterday's Daylily had to take his hat off to him in admiration.

Petal Shower thought for a moment before saying, "If Sunflower's first song had been a Cantonese one, I probably wouldn't have won. I've checked with Bai Yuanfei and Sunflower's second song is gonna be a Cantonese one, so be careful." She had always known that in order to eliminate Sunflower today, it would take more than her alone because she could only face off against Sunflower in one round. She needed someone else who could sing as well as her to finish the job. But Petal Shower did not make this clear as she could only ask this of herself, not the others.

She did not expect that someone would understand her intentions.

And all the more did she not expect that someone to be The Clown!

This man had always felt especially mysterious to Petal Shower. He seemed familiar, like he was someone she knew, yet was somewhat unfamiliar because she had no impression of anyone like that at all.

The Clown was quite calm. "I will."

Spinach clenched her teeth and said, "You must win!"

The Clown chuckled, "OK."

Could he win?

Zhang Ye wasn't sure, but he was also too lazy to think about it. He just found Sunflower to be unpleasing to the eye and so wanted to knock him out. This was Zhang Ye's style. Even with a mask on, his attitude was the same as before. If this fellow saw something that he didn't like, he would have to get involved. Could there be anything more enjoyable than this in life?

...

In Sunflower's waiting room.

Assistant Xu came rushing back in anger.

The camera in the waiting room was turned off as they requested not to be filmed.

Assistant Xu said, "That Clown did it on purpose!"

Sunflower grunted. "I know that."

"If he goes to the elimination round, his next opponent would be you?" Assistant Xu said in worry.

But Sunflower simply smiled. "Do you think that I'll lose today?"

Assistant Xu said, "But the first round..."

Sunflower said, "I'll be singing in Cantonese for my next song."

Assistant Xu immediately rested assured!

Cantonese?

Then the win would be a sure thing!

Even if The Clown was an amazingly talented singer, he wouldn't be able to use a Mandarin song in today's setting and atmosphere to beat Li Yu, who was going to sing a Cantonese song. As the news had already spread, many of those who came to attend today's recording had the mentality that they would be listening to Li Yu sing a Cantonese song. With such anticipation, there would surely

be an outpouring of emotion once Li Yu appeared onstage. At that time, it wouldn't matter who took the stage!

...

In The Clown's waiting room.

On the television, the match between Sunset Glow and Yesterday's Daylily began.

Han Qi came back in all angry. "Teacher, you're taking a huge risk!"

The Clown smiled. "It's not that bad."

Han Qi said anxiously, "But this is Li Yu we're talking about! He's the biggest name of all the contestants here!"

The biggest name?

That wasn't true now, was it?

Zhang Ye chuckled but did not say anything.

Everyone thought that Sunflower was the biggest name of all the contestants on King of Masked Singers. But in reality, nobody, not even the program team, knew that this unknown Clown was actually a much bigger name than Sunflower!

Comparing who was more popular?

Would I be afraid of you?

Zhang Ye even had the confidence to say that if he were to take off his mask and reveal his identity, even if he were to sing "[The Hottest Ethnic Trend](#)," he could take the throne of the Masked King. But there was no meaning to that. Zhang Ye did not come here to compete with popularity; he was not here to swagger before others. The point of the show was for the celebrities to cast aside their popularity and reputation to compete solely on talent. But of course, he didn't dare take off his mask at this time. He was afraid that it might halt the broadcast of the show. As such, when faced with an arrogant Li Yu who had resorted to using his

popularity to beat the others, Zhang Ye despised him.

I didn't use my popularity against you, yet you want to use your popularity to stifle me?

It had been Zhang Ye who personally knocked Li Yu off the A-list Celebrity Rankings.

So Zhang Ye found it rather amusing.

Hmm, which song should I choose?

Which song would be most suitable?

Zhang Ye started pondering. He had prepared a total of four songs today, and "Life's More Than the Grind" was just used. Now there were three songs remaining.

That one?

Or that one?

Should he combat him indirectly?

Or clash with him head on?

He was a little undecided as it was difficult to make a choice.

So he simply gave up on thinking. Zhang Ye turned his attention to the television to watch the match between Sunset Glow and Yesterday's Daylily.

He didn't feel anxious, but Han Qi said in panic, "Teacher, what are you doing?"

Zhang Ye said, "Watching their match."

Han Qi said in disbelief, "We're faced with elimination yet you're taking things at your own pace? What if we get eliminated in the next round? Have you thought of which song you'll sing? I heard that you rehearsed four songs?"

Zhang Ye laughed. "Let's think about it when the time comes."

When the time comes?

But it's coming right up!

Han Qi gave up. She truly believed that The Clown didn't have much of an advantage. If she were to be blunt about it, today's stage was Sunflower's home field. Even if The Clown could sing a little better than Sunflower, he still couldn't beat him, unless he was like Petal Shower who could crush him with both her song and singing skill!

Singing skill?

Everyone knew that The Clown had that!

But as for the song choice?

What song could take on the Cantonese song that Li Yu was going to sing?

...

Sunset Glow and Yesterday's Daylily finished singing.

The voting began.

The results were decided very quickly.

Unsurprisingly, Sunset Glow won by a huge margin!

Yesterday's Daylily was not surprised. He smiled sadly as he congratulated Sunset Glow.

This match was very exciting to watch and the audience got quite a bit of enjoyment out of it. But when they thought about how the elimination round was coming up, much of the audience got distracted once again.

Sunflower?

The Clown?

Yesterday's Daylily?

Of those three, two had to leave the show? Only one of them could remain?

How cruel was this! Can this episode get any more exciting than this?

The Clown and Sunflower were currently the two contestants with the highest popularity. In the eyes of many, these two were supposed to be fighting for the crown of the Masked King and were both capable enough to do that. But today, these two had ended up fighting for the right to "survive" on the show? One of these two had to be eliminated? This development came out of left field!

The elimination round was about to begin!

The audience was getting so excited it was like they were on an adrenaline rush!

"It's starting!"

"The first round is over! It's time for the elimination round!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu will prevail!"

"There's no suspense to this! We don't even need to watch!"

"Haha, Li Yu's going to perform the songs he's best at!"

"Cantonese songs!"

"Come and sing the Cantonese song!"

"Yeah, we've been waiting so long!"

"We came here today just to see Li Yu sing in Cantonese!"

The studio was heating up.

Many of Li Yu's fans were waving their fluorescent glow sticks to cheer on their idol!

At the panel of judges.

Zhang Xia asked, "Who do you guys think will win?"

Chen Yidong smiled and said, "Definitely Li Yu, I guess."

Wang Zhuishu thought about it. "Actually, I'm hoping that The Clown will win. But I can't think of a reason why Sunflower would lose. He has the advantage of being in just the right place, at just the right time, and as the just right person."

Amy was worried. "The Clown is in danger!"

Yao Jiancai did not quite understand. He asked, "Didn't Petal Shower beat him just now?"

Chen Guang explained, "Sunflower will be singing a Cantonese song. As a Hong Kong singer, him singing in Cantonese and Mandarin are two totally different things!"

Yao Jiancai simply said, "Oh, so it's like that."

Onstage.

Dong Shanshan raised her cue cards and recited some advertising messages. Then, with a smile, she said, "Next we head into the elimination round. Let's welcome our first competitor—Sunflower in the Starlight!"

Cheers erupted instantaneously!

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

He was incredibly popular!

Even before he started to sing, a lot of those in the audience were already standing!

Then, the title of the song was shown on the teleprompter screen overhead. When some of the audience members saw it, they screamed even louder!

This was a purely Cantonese song!

It was a love song!

It was one of Li Yu's representative works!

"I Really Hate You."

Lyricist: Xu Fei.

Composer: Li Yu.

This was Li Yu's debut song. Back then, the song wasn't terribly well-known but held a very special meaning for Li Yu. He performed this song at almost every concert. Since then, many fans gradually became familiar with the song and also started liking it!

"This is great!"

"I love listening to this song!"

"Li Yu's maiden work! I'm looking forward to it!"

"There's no hope for The Clown now!"

"That's right!"

Chapter 1026: The Clown vs. Sunflower!

Onstage.

The man with a sunflower mask took to the stage slowly.

There were screams and shouts coming from the audience, each one louder than the last!

Zhang Ye's mother said, "I rather like this guy."

His father nodded. "Mhm."

His second sister said in anticipation, "His Cantonese songs have always been great!"

"It's starting, it's starting!" His third sister held her breath.

The music played and the studio turned quiet. The audience was very cooperative and accommodating toward Sunflower. Those girls who had been making a racket during Petal Shower's performance were now covering their mouths, afraid that they would cause a disturbance and affect their idol.

Cello strings.

Piano keys.

A familiar melody floated on the stage.

Many in the audience were so familiar with this song that they started humming along to it in their heads.

Sunflower raised his head and gripped the microphone.

"I really hate you.

"Those memories...

"I really hate you.

"Have forgotten me."

A female fan looked enchanted!

A lot of people had closed their eyes to listen to the song. They

were enjoying it to the utmost!

It was wonderful!

This was what a Cantonese song should be!

Previously on this stage, only The Clown had performed a Cantonese song. It was done informally as he sang something about a "hamlet" or something, talking about the "villagers" and "goats and cows." At that time, his singing pronunciation was rather inaccurate and had badly shocked many people. Thus, the Cantonese song Sunflower was presently performing would be considered the first true Cantonese song to be sung on King of Masked Singers. Compared to Zhang Ye's previous world, Cantonese songs occupied half of the industry's market share here and wasn't considered a niche market. The reason that no one had yet to sing a Cantonese song on this stage was not that Petal Shower and the others thought Cantonese songs niche, but that they couldn't sing them. Performance of these songs largely depended on the singer's hometown. If there were any signs of bad pronunciation during the song, it could easily cause the listeners to lose interest in the entire performance.

But as Li Yu was a born and bred Hong Konger, there was no need to talk about his pronunciation. Moreover, he had started out singing Cantonese songs, and more than 80% of his released albums were in Cantonese. Since this was his livelihood, it would be a wonder if he couldn't sing it well. The audience was very receptive to his performance!

At the judging panel.

Chen Yidong praised, "Great singing."

Amy agreed, "It is pretty good."

Li Yu was considered a veteran in the entertainment industry. When everyone learned he was going to perform a Cantonese song, they all knew that it wouldn't be bad even without listening. He

had the ability to sing well, and the song was good too.

Zhang Xia commented, "There's no surprise here."

Chen Guang stated objectively, "It's good, but I've heard him sing this song too many times and it's always much the same. It's not a song that can really raise our spirits."

Wang Zhuishu said, "Sunflower today seems?"

Zhang Xia replied, "Yeah, he's fairly average."

Yao Jiancai turned around to look at the audience's warm reception and said, "But the audience seems to be buying it."

Yes, a lot of the audience members were convinced by the performance. As long as it was Li Yu singing, they'd think it was good. They did not care about whether the tenor of this song was appropriate or if the particulars of the singing were handled well.

On the stage.

Sunflower knew it himself. He had been affected by the previous round, thinking that he should be fighting for the throne of the Masked King today. But with Petal Shower stopping him, he was in an awful mood and rather upset as well. He regretted not singing the Cantonese song he was best at in his first appearance, which would have ensured his victory. He had underestimated his opponents. These thoughts kept running through his head even while he was performing, and it definitely affected how well he was doing. But fortunately for Sunflower, he was very experienced and had a good singing technique. That was enough for him to handle today's situation. As he got to the latter half of his performance, he actually sang better!

"I hate you, hate you, I hate you.

"Why can't I forget the past.

"When you said you loved me,

"It was so beautiful.

"Why did you leave me in the end?

"I really hate you.

"Those memories...

"I really hate you.

"Have forgotten me."

Some of the female audience members were screaming at this point!

They stood up and clapped, thrashing their fluorescent glow sticks!

Several of the judges on the guessing panel were stunned by this. They hadn't expected that Sunflower could readjust his emotions and handle the latter half of the song so exquisitely. If they had to give him a score, they would give him 85 points out of a 100 for this performance. This was a very good performance, much better than the Mandarin song he had performed!

Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, and the others looked at one another.

This was the end for The Clown!

He didn't stand a chance!

Sunflower was relying on his popularity with the audience. Even the Mandarin song he sung averagely almost evened out with Petal Shower's amazing performance, although he narrowly lost at the end. With this "I Really Hate You," The Clown's chances of winning had nearly fallen to nil. No one was optimistic about his chances.

...

Backstage.

In the waiting room.

Zhang Ye was listening to Sunflower's performance, not speaking.

"I Really Hate You"? He didn't like this song either. Perhaps his values were far too different than Li Yu's, and they were two people who didn't go well together. So Zhang Ye stopped focusing on listening.

Now that he was by himself in the waiting room, he found his bag and took out his cell phone which he kept on silent mode. He had wanted to check the netizen's comments about the contestants but saw some unread text messages that his mother had sent to him instead.

His mother: "Son?"

His mother: "Where are you? Why don't I see you anywhere?"

His mother: "Didn't you get here really early today?"

Zhang Ye immediately replied: "Yeah, but I'm busy right now."

Very quickly, his mother texted back: "Did you get the money?"

Zhang Ye smiled. "Yes. Thanks, Mom. It was quite an achievement to get 10,000 yuan out of you."

His mother: "You rascal, don't spend it recklessly now. When you find a job, you must pay me back. It'll be a loan to you for now. By the way, Mother's Day is coming soon, but you don't have to worry about buying me anything. I don't need anything, and I don't like anything either. Consider that as a heads up in case you're thinking of planning something, got it? Also, if you have the time to do that, quickly find a job. Go out and network some more, ask around too. If there's still nobody who wants to hire you, then screw those idiots and come back and rest at home. You won't have to do anything anymore! You can even save yourself their incompetence!"

Zhang Ye felt his heart warm. "I understand."

His mother: "OK, I'm gonna stop talking now. Your dad and I are listening to Sunflower sing and I think it's pretty good."

Behind him, the door opened.

Han Qi came into the room. "Teacher, you're almost up."

"Alright." Zhang Ye placed his cell phone back into his bag and exhaled. Then he turned around and walked out.

Sunflower had finished singing, but the thunderous applause in the studio could still be heard backstage.

Han Qi was very nervous. "You can do it, Teacher!"

Hu Fei saw The Clown approach. "The Clown, break a leg."

Dafei cheered, "Teacher, go get him!"

Xiao Lu added, "You'll definitely do well!"

Petal Shower looked at him.

Sunset Glow nodded at him.

Spinach raised her hand and gave him a thumbs up from not too far away to cheer him on!

However, in comparison to that overwhelming applause in the studio for Li Yu, everyone's cheers for him felt underwhelming.

Could he win?

A lot of the program team staff sighed.

Today's Li Yu had turned completely shameless!

Paying for PR campaigns in the media!

Exposing himself!

Asking for votes!

Causing trouble!

And he even performed his breakout song!

Unless The Clown had an even more astonishing song, he wouldn't stand the ghost of a chance of competing against Li Yu. What could he possibly do?

So did Zhang Ye have such a song?

The answer was a resounding yes!

He definitely had one! In fact, he had many!

The other times he was onstage, Zhang Ye had performed some of the less mainstream songs in the competition. But this did not mean that he didn't know how to sing mainstream songs. He just didn't bring them for the audience to hear because he thought it wasn't time for that yet. But today, Zhang Ye did not plan to hold back anymore. He was ready to bring one of them out to compete against Li Yu!

Which song should he choose?

He considered the song that Li Yu performed.

Cantonese?

"I Really Hate You"?

Instantly, Zhang Ye made a decision!

That one!

Chapter 1027: The Clown's Cantonese song!

Onstage.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Let's welcome our next singer—The Clown!"

Applause rang out.

"He's comin'."

"It's The Clown."

"How unlucky of him to have to appear after Li Yu."

"Haha, it doesn't matter what he sings now."

"Li Yu sang really well."

"But of course. That's his signature song."

"Li Yu is still the best when he sings in Cantonese!"

"No one can sing Cantonese songs on this stage except for Li Yu. That in and of itself is an overwhelming advantage for him. Even if The Clown performs exceedingly well like Petal Shower did today, it's unlikely that he'll win in this round like she did in the previous one. This round will be decided by the type of song, and even if The Clown sings really well, a lot of people won't compare his song to Li Yu's Cantonese song. There's no way to compare them as they are totally different styles and languages. Since there's no comparison, it won't matter who sings better. No one will be able to distinguish whose singing was better, so the only thing left to compare is their popularity. And how many people in the studio today don't know Li Yu? Who wouldn't spare him some face!"

"Then is The Clown definitely going to lose?"

"Of course."

"He can only blame himself for admitting defeat just now."

The audience was applauding, but it did not sound very

enthusiastic and felt more like a symbolic welcome. Although there were still a lot of people who were not Li Yu's fans looking forward to The Clown's performance and wondering if he would be singing yet another original, the outcome of this round was already very obvious to many of them.

Li Yu did not return to his waiting room and just waited around at the holding area. He looked at The Clown and sneered internally. He even admitted defeat on purpose so that he could try knock me out in the elimination round?

Alright then!

Bring it on!

What kind of Mandarin song are you going to sing this time? I'm all ears!

The Clown took the stage and walked straight to the house band.

The band looked at him and asked, "Which song will it be?"

The Clown replied, "The third song we rehearsed."

Music Director Bai Yuanfei was shocked. "Are you sure?"

"I'm quite sure." Zhang Ye smiled.

The band's guitarist said in a speechless manner, "Why are the songs you choose always the ones we don't feel optimistic about? Of the four songs you rehearsed, it was the other two songs we were optimistic about. So why did you choose these two songs to perform?"

Zhang Ye said, "Because you guys haven't listened to me sing it yet."

Indeed, The Clown had just hummed along to the melody during the rehearsal. He did not actually sing.

The drummer said, "Are you sure?"

Zhang Ye said, "It must be this song!"

Bai Yuanfei nodded. "OK, you're the singer, you decide."

After changing scores, the band did a little warmup.

The audience became confused when they saw that.

Looking at the stage, Zhang Ye's father asked, "What's the matter?"

His eldest sister wondered, "Could he have only just decided which song to sing?"

His mother replied, "Can you even do that?"

His eldest sister said, "Generally, no one does that because it's too risky."

At the judging panel.

Zhang Xia sighed and said, "If The Clown gets eliminated, it would really be such a pity."

Amy felt that this discussion of theirs would not be aired, so she did not hold back. "More importantly, it's unfair. This isn't a music and singing competition anymore. With Sunflower's antics, it has turned into a popularity contest."

Chen Guang said, "The Clown has a chance to win."

Yao Jiancai asked, "Oh? How?"

Chen Guang said, "He can also reveal who he is by removing his mask onstage."

Amy gave a bitter smile. "The Clown would never do such a thing!"

Chen Guang spread his hands. "That's why he won't win. Under the premise that Li Yu had already exposed himself as a Hong Kong singer, and with this atmosphere, it's almost impossible for him to win if he uses a Mandarin song to verse Li Yu."

Amy said, "There's no hope for him then."

Everything was ready onstage.

The band nodded to The Clown.

The lights dimmed.

Everyone instantly focused their attention on The Clown.

One second.

Two seconds.

The music did not start yet because The Clown was still adjusting his breathing.

Several of those female fans of Li Yu's started shouting again without warning.

"Hurry up!"

"Why isn't it starting yet?"

"Let's go, Brother Li Yu!"

"Li Yu is the best!"

In the silence of the studio, those voices cut through the air!

When they finished shouting, they looked at each other and laughed!

In the wings, Li Yu was smiling.

Backstage, Assistant Xu was gloating.

However, the judges frowned.

Some of the nearby audience members looked at them in disgust!

Zhang Ye, though, was in no rush to begin and did not seem to hear the commotion. He was no longer bothered by the outcome. All he could think about was his mother's messages from earlier. He couldn't refrain from raising his head and looking in the direction of where his parents were seated. He couldn't quite make them out in the distance, but he still managed to locate where they were sitting.

His parents were looking at him as well.

At this moment, he suddenly felt a pang of guilt.

As Zhang Ye was in a good mood these days, he had helped them buy breakfast for two days and did the laundry twice. But in the end, his parent's behavior nearly made Zhang Ye laugh. They thought that there was something wrong with him? They thought that he was in need of money? They thought that he had something to ask of them? And they even quickly transferred 10,000 yuan to him?

It was truly a very funny incident.

But right now, Zhang Ye could not muster up a smile at all.

He felt very guilty about how little his contributions to his family were. That just by doing a few minor chores at home, his parents felt overwhelmed by his actions. Thinking back on things, Zhang Ye felt very embarrassed as he suddenly thought that he had not been a good son. All of a sudden, he felt like he had a lot of things that he wanted to say!

The music started.

It was very soft guitar strumming.

The title of the song was projected onto the teleprompter screen.

The moment when they saw the title of this song, many audience members were stunned!

["I Really Love You"](#)!

Zhang Xia was stunned!

Chen Guang was surprised!

Petal Shower and Spinach were both taken aback!

Li Yu was dumbstruck and a dark expression spread across his face!

The audience stared and their jaws dropped!

"I Really Hate You"?

"I Really Love You"?

Zhang Ye was facing his parents. He gently raised his microphone. The moment he sang the first line, everyone in the studio—including the program team, judges, contestants, and the audience—were dumbfounded. They could not believe what they had just heard. Some of the audience members even jumped out of their seats in shock!

The Clown sang softly.

"Those hands that cannot be beautified.

"Forever warming me from behind.

"Nagging but still caring for me.

"I'm guilty of not seeing your love."

Amy screamed, "Ahhh!"

Zhang Xia stared, slack-jawed!

Chen Guang stared wide-eyed!

Petal Shower said in a speechless manner, "What?"

Spinach said in a daze, "He, he..."

Hu Fei was dumbfounded!

The audience was also dumbfounded!

A Cantonese song!

The Clown was singing a Cantonese song as well!

And why did his Cantonese sound so fucking standard?

Why?

Oh my god!

Oh my god!

Everyone in the studio looked like they had seen a ghost!

The band playing the accompaniment was shocked!

The Clown closed his eyes and sang.

"Absorbed in music she did not like.

"But a mother's love never dies.

"With tenacity and joy, I strive.

"To return your love at last.

"Your lessons and gift still warm my soul.

"Looking after me without complaint."

Suddenly, the guitar accompaniment stopped!

Half a second later, the drumbeat kicked in as the guitar accompaniment came back along with the bass and drum set all at once. The music exploded through the studio!

The entire studio was shocked!

Everyone felt like their blood was erupting with energy!

The Clown pointed into the audience.

"It's you!

"With those loving eyes!

"You taught me to face the future with grit!

"You urged me not to quit when I fell down!

"I can't explain how to return your love!

"Your immense love is endless!

"So, please, permit me to say 'I really love you!'"

Dad.

Mom.

I'm not too good with words and don't know how to express myself that well. I can talk a lot with other people. When I meet my friends, I can chat with them day and night. If someone offends me, I can scold them for three days and nights. But in front of you

two, I sometimes can't even speak a single word. I don't know what to say or how I should express myself.

But...

I really love both of you!

I, I really love both of you!

In the audience, his mother suddenly burst into tears. For some reason, she had started to cry!

Zhang Xia was also in tears as she looked at her pair of aging hands. Tears streamed down her face for whatever reason. When she reached up to wipe them away, she realized that her tears were increasing even as she tried to wipe them away.

In the studio, a lot of mothers were crying!

Many children clenched their teeth!

They did not know what was happening to them, just that they thought this song was amazing!

It was really great!

Zhang Ye continued singing.

"Those hands that cannot be beautified.

"Forever warming me from behind.

"Nagging but still caring for me.

"I'm guilty of not seeing your love.

"I still recall your loving hands.

"Taking care of me unchangingly.

"My dream has finally come true; I hope I can share the glory.

"Your lessons and gift still warm my soul.

"Looking after me without complaint."

The music stopped!

And exploded again!

Zhang Ye sang loudly.

"It's you! With those loving eyes!"

At this moment, a lot of people could not help but stand from their seats and wave the fluorescent glow sticks in their hands to the rhythm. A lot of them were shocked and had tear stains on their faces. No one could believe that The Clown could actually sing such a song!

"You taught me to face the future with grit!

"You urged me not to quit when I fell down!

"I can't explain how to return your love!

"Your immense love is endless!

"So, please, permit me to say 'I really love you!'"

Screams!

Applause!

He was about to upend the studio!

Suddenly, the music stopped again.

There was no sound at all!

The audience unconsciously stopped clapping and covered their mouths. Hypnotized, they stared at The Clown onstage as the entire studio went eerily quiet!

The Clown raised his microphone.

Dad.

Mom.

Thank you.

Thank you for bringing me up.

Thank you for teaching me right and wrong.

I...

I..

The Clown raised his microphone again and lowered it again.

One second.

Two seconds.

Everyone was looking at him.

The Clown raised his microphone for the third time: "So please permit me...

"...to say.

"I really love you."

Chapter 1028: Professional face-smacking athlete!

The Clown's final line in a cappella unleashed an outpouring of emotion from many in the audience!

Some of them started crying!

Some were desperately holding back their tears!

They all understood the song as its lyrics had triggered tears in many of them. The Clown was not singing "I really love you" or "I'm telling you that I love you very much" or even "do you know that I love you." What he sang was: "Please permit me...to say...'I really love you!'"

Please permit me!

It was completely different from telling you!

It was completely different from asking to say it!

"Please permit me" had an apologetic tone that carried a sense of guilt!

Especially during that last line The Clown sang in a cappella. He had raised his microphone twice and lowered it twice because he could not manage to sing it. It wasn't until the third time that The Clown raised his microphone that he was finally able to sing it! That kind of emotional struggle, that sense of guilt and reservedness were all thoroughly portrayed in this moment. This was no longer a matter of singing skill anymore, it was a sublimation of emotions!

There was no pretentiousness to it!

There was no affectation!

It was all natural!

The emotions he displayed throughout the song were so real that

everyone found it hard to believe! No one knew that The Clown's parents were actually seated in the audience!

The music started and ended with a cappella.

The Clown lowered his microphone and bowed deeply.

The performance ended.

His mother stood up crying!

Zhang Xia also stood up in tears!

Applause erupted!

Cheers rang out!

"That was great!"

"That was so unbelievable!"

"It was a Cantonese song! It was actually a Cantonese song!"

"The Clown wanted to compete against Li Yu with what he's best at!"

"I don't know what to say! Oh my god! Isn't this song too good? And it's even an original? Who the fuck wrote this song? Who wrote it?!"

"Earlier, I thought that Li Yu would win. But I'm thinking differently now!"

"Me too! Who said that The Clown would lose?"

"There are two songs I've listened to this year that have made me cry. The first one was 'A Letter to Home' that Zhang Ye sang on the Spring Festival Gala stage; the other is this one. I'm not attracted by the singing, but by the lyrics and emotions poured into the song. It was so great and so amazing!"

"Is this who The Clown is? Everyone has underestimated him!"

"I have no words! I can no longer express what I'm feeling!"

All of a sudden, someone shouted, "The Clown!"

Then shout after shout sounded!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

The shouting was syncing up!

The voices were getting louder!

Zhang Ye walked off the stage.

Han Qi rushed over to him.

Spinach, Sunset Glow, and Yesterday's Daylily, and the others went up to him together!

Her cheeks stained with tears, Han Qi exclaimed, "You're incredible! That was fantastic!"

Looking shocked, Petal Shower said, "How'd you do that?"

Sunset Glow stared at him and said, "There are only two possibilities as to why he can sing a Cantonese song so well. The first possibility is that the singer already knows Cantonese, so he naturally wouldn't have a problem with the language. The second possibility is that if he is a singer who doesn't know Cantonese, he sings this song repeatedly and continually. He would have to listen to the original version hundreds to a thousand times and then practice it dozens to hundreds of times to be able to have such a good pronunciation! Teacher Clown, you're way too astonishing! How'd you manage to do it?"

Though she'd been in the competition for a long time now, this was the first time that everyone heard Sunset Glow talk so much. She was usually a reserved person who didn't talk much.

Yesterday's Daylily said anxiously, "Yeah, h-how did you manage to do it?"

The Clown did not answer. He just laughed it off.

Dozens of times?

Hundreds of times?

Surely it was even more than that!

This song was extremely famous in Zhang Ye's previous world. All those songs he had sung would not have the reach and influence that this song possessed even if they were all grouped together. How could Zhang Ye have only listened to it several hundred times? He would sing this song every time he went out for karaoke and would hear it at all kinds of places from time to time. If it were any other Cantonese song, Zhang Ye would probably not know how to sing them because he really did not know Cantonese. He could only understand some simple sentences and his pronunciation was not good, in addition. But if it was "[I Really Love You](#)," he could handle it without any problems! It would be impossible to get the song wrong!

In truth, Zhang Ye had not intended to use this song. It wasn't that he didn't like this song, but because this song would seriously make him look like a bully! He had wanted to use a song that was mainstream, yet how was this considered a mainstream song? It had already surpassed the boundaries of mainstream. It was a well-known classic in his previous world! But if Li Yu wanted to play dirty? If he wanted to bully others by using his popularity? Then Zhang Ye had no choice but to bring this song out! Moreover, Mother's Day was approaching. He had really wanted to sing this song so that he could convey some words to his parents. There were some things that Zhang Ye could never say to them under normal circumstances. Since he could not say them, then he would use this stage and song to tell his parents!

The crowd was still applauding!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

In the waiting area.

Li Yu's face turned green with rage. He never expected that The Clown would choose to sing a Cantonese song! Not only him, no one else expected it either! Logically, as Li Yu was a Cantonese singer from Hong Kong, it was normal for him to sing a Cantonese song. Since that was his mother tongue, he could sing such songs almost effortlessly and had been doing so for a decade now! Even if they thought with their feet, no one should have used a Cantonese song versus Li Yu in the crucial elimination round!

But that was exactly what The Clown did!

And his Cantonese was not even any worse than Li Yu's!

It was too professional!

His pronunciation was too standard!

Even if it were Li Yu who went out to sing, it wouldn't get any better than this!

Why?

What the fuck was this?

How did he know how to sing a Cantonese song?

Li Yu had no way to understand it! No one could understand it!

Could this person really be a singer from Hong Kong? But that was impossible! That was absolutely impossible!

Everyone had thought that The Clown would not win because they had taken today's atmosphere and circumstances into account. Everything was advantageous for Li Yu and nothing indicated that The Clown, who sang in Mandarin, could secure a victory. This was because Cantonese and Mandarin songs were two different musical genres that could not be compared. As long as

they could not be compared, even if The Clown's singing were better and he performed exceedingly well, things would be meaningless. A lot of the audience members would support Li Yu based on their feelings because of his popularity!

But what shocked everyone was that The Clown had fucking sung a Cantonese song!

And even the title of the song was smacking Li Yu's face!

The Beijing Television program team staff saw that The Clown had left the stage and were looking at him in astonishment, as if they were seeing some kind of god!

It's similar circumstances to your last song!

He sang about how life was dark and a grind?

While you sang about how life's about more than just the grind?

He sang a Cantonese song!

You also sang a Cantonese song!

He sang "I Really Hate You"!

And then you fucking sang "I Really Love You"!

Fuck your big brother!

Are you a professional face-smacking athlete?

Are you planning to bash his face so hard that it becomes swollen?

This is slapping him to his fucking death!

Chapter 1029: Double play!

In the wings.

Yesterday's Daylily sighed and said, "It's my turn."

Spinach cheered, "Break a leg, Brother Daylily."

"What kind of name is that?" Yesterday's Daylily said, "Hai, do I even need to go onstage?"

Spinach smiled and said, "You can't make it through regardless, so let loose and sing."

Yesterday's Daylily looked at her, speechless. "Are you trying to console me?"

Spinach nodded. "Well, yes."

Yesterday's Daylily almost burst into tears. "Thanks a lot."

It took a lot of effort for the audience to calm down.

Then Dong Shanshan immediately announced that the next contestant take the stage.

Yesterday's Daylily took a deep breath and strode out onto the stage. He knew that he definitely stood no chance today. Whether it was against Sunflower or The Clown, they were both much better singers than he was. Moreover, the two of them had already accumulated a lot of popularity on this stage. As a result, Yesterday's Daylily let himself go since this was his last song on the stage. All he wanted now was to show the best side of himself.

Going into the performance with this thought, he managed to do much better than expected when singing his song!

The judges were surprised.

The audience was also surprised.

Even Yesterday's Daylily did not expect it. He had sung his second song much better than his first, surpassing his usual level!

The elimination round performances ended.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Alright. Now let's welcome Sunflower and The Clown back on stage."

Sunflower and The Clown returned.

When the audience saw them, they gave them a thunderous round of applause!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

The shouting started again!

Dong Shanshan maintained order. "Hur hur, everyone, please calm down. Shall we have the judges give their comments? Who are you cheering for in this round? Who do you think will make it into the next episode?"

The judges were silent for a bit.

Dong Shanshan named one of them. "Teacher Yao?"

Yao Jiancai chuckled and said, "I'm just a layman, so I can't make any professional judgments here. Let's listen to what the other teachers have to say first."

Zhang Xia spoke, "I'll talk about Yesterday's Daylily first. I still can't recognize who you are, but I think that you should be somewhat well-known in the music industry. You were a little nervous during the first song and overly cautious about making mistakes, so you didn't manage to perform to your potential. But for the second song, you sang very well and the choice of song was good as well. You gave me the feeling that you're like a younger version of Chen Guang and full of potential."

Yesterday's Daylily bowed his head. "Thank you, Teacher Zhang

Xia, but I don't deserve to be compared to Teacher Chen."

Zhang Xia thought for a moment. "Then, for Sunflower in the Starlight, a lot of people already know who you are. For you to be sing like that, I completely expected it. But of course, it did not manage to surprise me as a result. I believe that you did not manage to perform to your best today. As for The Clown, I still have nothing else to say besides the fact that you're outstanding. This "I Really Love You" truly made me cry. Thanks to you and the team behind you for writing such a song!" She was speaking without bias and on the performance itself.

But Amy's comments were more skewed. "If I were to choose, I would definitely pick The Clown. Whether it's his singing or the song, they raised the bar over the other two performers. And I was disappointed with Sunflower's performance today. Although it was nice to listen to, it did not reach that quality I was looking for!"

Sunflower did not say anything.

The Clown kept quiet as well.

Actually, Sunflower did not perform as poorly as Amy had said. It was because of Li Yu's behavior and extreme methods that Amy didn't have a good impression of him. How could you expose yourself outside the show? Paying for PR campaigns? Asking for votes? Using your popularity to muzzle the other contestants? Alright then, us judges can do the same to you and restrain you on the show! Haven't you heard the saying "only the official is allowed to light the fire"?

Some members of the audience were not having any of this.

"What the heck!"

"What are you saying!"

"Li Yu sang so well!"

"What lousy song was The Clown even singing!"

"Is there something wrong with your hearing?"

"What kinds of judges are these? Are you sure they're professionals?"

"Ptui!"

Some of Li Yu's fans were annoyed by the judges' comments!

Chen Guang did not care about the commotion in the crowd. He asked, "The Clown, are you actually a singer from Hong Kong?"

Wang Zhuishu also asked, "Are you?"

When The Clown sang the Cantonese version of "Our Villagers," his pronunciation was not too standard. It was even so funny that it made a lot of people double over with laughter, and no one thought that he was a Cantonese singer. But with today's song, he had confused everyone again!

Who could he be!

Just where was this singer from?

Chen Yidong stared at The Clown. "Can you give us some clues?"

Amy asked as well, "You mentioned that you were at least a B-lister? Is that true? Also, where are you really from?"

They were very curious!

They were so curious about who this man was that they would die to find out!

The Clown thought for a moment before raising his microphone and singing.

"My home's in the northeast!

"On the Songhua River!

"There are hills and dales covered with soybeans and [sorghum](#)!"

He could switch between two different accents!

The judges and audience fainted!

Bro!

Could you please stop messing around?

Just stop it!

What the heck was even happening!

You were just a Hong Konger, and now you've become a northeasterner!?

Everyone had to take their hat off to this person. They were completely taken in by this person's ability to sing spontaneously about anything, and he could even do it so convincingly!

Dong Shanshan didn't know how to react as she stood beside him.

What sort of person was this?!

Why does he never say anything truthful?

Sunflower's eyes underneath his mask were staring coldly at The Clown!

Yao Jiancai looked at him curiously. This person was really too wondrous, wasn't he? In the entertainment circle, other than his long-time partner Zhang Ye, was there another person who was like this?

Dong Shanshan quickly said, "Alright, let's begin the voting. As this is the elimination round and there can only be one contestants who stays in the competition, everyone should consider their votes carefully before casting them!"

In a heartbeat, the atmosphere turned tense!

Sunflower looked into the audience.

The Clown did not say a word.

"Give it to Li Yu!"

"Give it to The Clown!"

"'I Really Love You,' that's the best song I've ever heard!"

"Do you even know Cantonese?"

"The lyrics were shown on the big screen, can't you read?"

"'I Really Love You' is the only song that I fell in love with immediately after hearing it! It's goddamn amazing! It even suits the occasion well! Mother's Day is coming up! These two songs of The Clown's were incredibly touching! I could hear from his performances that he truly sang them from the bottom of his heart! I used to think that The Clown was very godly during the last two episodes, but I've realized that he's even more godly in this episode!"

"I liked that 'Life's More Than the Grind'!"

"Hurry up and vote already!"

"Ah, Li Yu's ahead!"

"What?"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Li Yu!"

The audience members were nearly coming to blows!

Zhang Ye's father didn't really know how to operate the voting device. He was getting on in age after all, so it was difficult for him to pick up something new. As a result, he handed the voting device to Zhang Ye's eldest sister and said, "Dandan, help me to vote."

His eldest sister said, "Sure. Who do you want to vote for?"

His father didn't hesitate. "The Clown!"

His mother also said, "Help me too."

"Who do you want?" His eldest sister looked at her.

His mother said, "The Clown."

His third sister exclaimed, "What? You're all voting for The Clown? Then me too!"

His mother said seriously, "Even if Zhang Yuanqi were to come today, or whichever Heavenly King, I would still give my vote to The Clown!"

His second sister said, "Me too! I was actually here to support Li Yu, but when those two Cantonese songs were sung, it was too obvious who sang better! The difference between those two songs is too obvious!"

"I Really Hate You"?

It was just a petty love song.

But "I Really Love You"? This was a song about a great love!

The tallies were ever changing!

Sunflower had taken the lead and never relinquished it!

The Clown was in second.

Yesterday's Daylily was in last place.

10 votes...

50 votes...

100 votes...

When Li Yu saw this, he heaved a sigh of relief. He thought to himself how his popularity was still holding up. No matter what The Clown sang, he shouldn't lose. He used to be an A-lister after all, a big name who was famous throughout the country, so how could he possibly lose to an anonymous singer whose identity no one knew?

However, when the voting was coming to a close, Li Yu expression finally changed!

The Clown was catching up!

Then, The Clown overtook him!

Li Yu's expression instantly darkened!

What was happening?

What the hell is this?

Keep voting for me!

All of you, give me your damn votes!

What the hell are you people doing? Just what?

Hurry up!

Hurry!

The Clown, on the other hand, did not turn to look at the big screen and just stood there quietly.

Close to the end, Li Yu was too scared to watch. His dark look was facing the audience and he was really panicking now. He had chosen to offend Beijing Television and the other singers by revealing himself, which had led to this situation, all because he wanted to get to the throne of the Masked King and become the grand champion of the show. He had wanted to use King of Masked Singers to garner more support and make his return to the A-list Celebrity Rankings! But right now, even he himself did not know why he wasn't in the versus round for the crown of the Masked King. Instead, he was actually facing the risk of elimination? How could this be possible?! This...this didn't make any fucking sense!

Finally, Dong Shanshan announced, "Alright, voting has ended!"

The entire studio fell silent!

A lot of people looked angry!

But many others were gasping!

"The winner is..." Dong Shanshan announced, "The Clown!"

Instantaneously, applause filled the studio!

Sunset Glow felt excited!

Spinach was screaming!

Hu Fei shouted, "Great!"

Han Qi was so excited she nearly cried. "He won! He won! Teacher Clown has won!"

My god!

This was too unbelievable!

Petal Shower took the first round while The Clown handled the second round!

It was a double play!

The two of them had killed off Li Yu!

The task that had seemed impossible to everyone had been completed by Petal Shower and The Clown! The Beijing Television program team staff did not know what to say!

Some of them could not believe it!

Some of them were dumbfounded!

Assistant Xu, who was backstage, almost smashed the things around him! Son of a bitch!

Onstage, Li Yu couldn't breathe!

Why?

How did this happen?

Petal Shower?

The Clown?

Who the fuck are you people?!

Dong Shanshan suddenly said, "Teacher Sunflower, Teacher Yesterday's Daylily, sorry, but you have been eliminated. The two of you did quite well, and the judges have given both of you their comments. Right now, you can choose whether to reveal yourself or not. Would you like some time to think?"

Sunflower's face stayed under the cover of his mask.

Dong Shanshan had to ask again.

Sunflower said, "I choose not to take my mask off!" He stormed off the stage without even making a speech!

How embarrassing!

How face smacking!

Right now, Li Yu no longer had any face left to reveal himself!

His face had been smacked "swollen"!

a type of grain, can be fermented to make alcohol

Chapter 1030: Troublemaking fans!

Sunflower left the stage dejectedly!

When many of Li Yu's fans saw this, their hearts broke!

"Brother Li Yu!"

"Li Yu!"

"How could you eliminate Li Yu?"

"This is such a shady show!"

"They were trying to take down Brother Li Yu!"

"Unfair! This is unfair!"

Some of his diehard fans were having none of it. They started shouting and screaming as though they were intent on causing trouble!

When Hu Fei and the program team staff saw this, they could only shake their heads lightly. This was indeed a case of a celebrity having fans of similar temperament. Li Yu's integrity was already questionable as he had started doing things unscrupulously. In order to fight for the crown of the Masked King to garner popularity for his status, he resorted to underhanded methods. Looking at his group of fans, it seemed that many of their characters were the same as his. They did not know of the severity of their actions, nor did they care about respecting others.

The program team staff then thought about Teacher Zhang Ye.

Looking at Teacher Zhang's fans, they didn't usually show much support for him in normal times. Whenever he met with trouble, his fans would always appear to gloat at him first by fooling around and ridiculing him. But once Teacher Zhang encountered real trouble, his fans would always gather their support and contribute their strength without a moment's hesitation. This was because they knew what respect was and could differentiate

between the severity of an incident. They understood when it was right to make jokes or fool around and when not to do so. They knew better than anyone!

This was where they were different!

And this was the only difference between their fanbases!

...

Yesterday's Daylily took off his mask!

The judges were all shocked!

"It's you?"

"Hey, so it's you!"

Chen Guang knew him.

Amy also knew him, but was not really close.

Yesterday's Daylily was not exactly a rookie in the industry. He had debuted in the music industry around four years ago but hadn't made much of an impact so far. He wasn't that well-known but was given some songs to sing for a few movies and television dramas in the past year. Lucky for him, those projects were very well-received and his songs became popular along with them. Perhaps not many would know his name, but if there was any mention of those songs, most people would immediately recognize them!

"I've heard his songs before!"

"I like him!"

"His singing's actually not that bad."

"Right, it was simply because his opponents were too strong that he got eliminated!"

Many of the audience members gave him their applause!

However, Li Yu's fans started booing, with a lot of them noisily leading it. Beijing Television could only send someone over to give

them a warning!

In the wings.

The Clown had just returned.

Petal Shower, Spinach, and the others met up with him over here.

Petal Shower put out her hand. "Nice teamwork?"

The Clown shook her hand. "Nice teamwork."

Spinach exclaimed, "You two were really shocking!"

The Clown and Petal Shower both shook their heads and laughed.

That was Li Yu!

That was fucking Li Yu, goddammit!

He was knocked out the show just like that by these two people? He got eliminated?

Especially The Clown, who faced the former A-lister who specialized in Cantonese songs. This...this...just who the hell was this guy? He managed to bring Li Yu to the point where he didn't even dare take off his mask?

Actually, if The Clown had beat Li Yu by just singing normally, Li Yu might not have ended up leaving the show in such a way. After all, he had come onto the show to garner more support. If he had taken off his mask, that would surely have helped him gain more popularity even though he had lost the competition. But as things turned out, Li Yu did not take off his mask. There was no way he could do it, because The Clown had really been too much of a jerk! First, he took a hit while he was down. Then came another two blows! "Life's More Than the Grind" and "I Really Love You" had given Li Yu a hard slap one after the other! He even destroyed him with a Cantonese song, the area Li Yu was supposedly most skilled in! If it were someone else, they would have chosen not to take off

their masks too!

How could they!

Just why would they want to take off their mask?

Han Qi came over. "Teacher!"

The Clown looked at her. "Hey."

Xiao Lu came up to them in astonishment. "Teacher Clown, did you really win?"

Han Qi was finding it difficult to express herself. "I...you..."

Dafei also came up to them. "'I Really Love You' made Little Han cry again! In fact, it also made me crying. It was so good, that song was so damn good!"

Han Qi and Dafei often listened to songs, but had never cried because of one. They never once thought that anyone could possibly cry because of listening to a song. It wasn't until they heard The Clown perform live, and after listening to Petal Shower's and the others' performances, that they finally understood that listening to people sing live was a totally different experience. The song, "I Really Love You," that The Clown had performed today was earth-shattering!

Sunset Glow suddenly asked, "Did your agency write this song for you?"

Zhang Ye did not say anything. He just laughed.

Spinach said in amazement, "What kind of a musician can write a song like that?"

Petal Shower suddenly said, "Could Zhang Ye have written them for you?"

Zhang Ye was startled and couldn't help letting out a chuckle, although he still did not say anything.

Sunset Glow said, "Yeah, Zhang Ye is very good at writing songs,

but he doesn't write them for just anyone." Then she looked at The Clown and said, "Well, it's fine if you don't wish to tell us. We won't ask anymore."

They had a lot of guesses, but none of them could have expected that the man standing in front of them was Zhang Ye himself!

Not far away, Dong Shanshan could be heard saying, "Next up, let's head into this episode's battle for the Masked King."

...

An hour later.

The recording of the show ended.

At some point in time, Zhang Ye, who had already changed out of his costume and taken off his shoes and mask, was walking around among the program team staff.

Many of the staff greeted him.

"Eh, Teacher Zhang!"

"Why didn't we see you around all this while?"

"Did you watch the recording today? It was wonderful!"

"Petal Shower was the Masked King in episode three!"

"You know, The Clown stood a chance as well."

"Teacher Zhang, I think Director Hu was looking for you."

Show recording was a very busy process and there were a lot of things to handle, so no one really took note of Zhang Ye and did not think much of his sudden disappearance or appearance.

In an office.

Zhang Ye found Hu Fei and went inside. When he came in, he saw that his parents and cousins were around as well. Obviously, Hu Fei brought them over from the studio after the recording ended.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Brother Hu."

Hu Fei pointed at him. "Your parents have been looking for you for the longest time, but you couldn't be found anywhere."

Zhang Ye said, "I was watching the recording studioside the entire time. Mom, Dad, let's go."

His parents stood up and said their goodbyes to Hu Fei.

Hu Fei smiled and said, "Auntie, Uncle, feel free to come by often." Then, he turned to Zhang Ye's cousins. "Come by whenever you want to watch a live recording of our show. Hur hur, there's no need to bother your cousin in the future, just come and look for me and I'll bring you in." Such treatment was not even afforded to the assistant directors. In the entire program team, only Zhang Ye's family members would have such preferential treatment. No one could raise any objections against it.

His third sister exclaimed, "Thank you, Brother Hu!"

Zhang Ye raised his chin and said, "What? Just once is enough. Do you really think you'll be coming here every episode?"

His second sister pouted. "Brother, you're really petty!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Do you think that other people do not need to work? Stop giving them unnecessary trouble."

Hu Fei said in amusement, "Don't listen to him. If you all wish to come, just come. I am the boss, and the entire program team listens to my decisions!"

The sisters cheered!

Then they left the office.

His mother exclaimed, "I got such a kick out of watching the performances!"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "It's not too shabby, right?"

"It was great!" His mother had experienced many emotions today.

"Especially when The Clown sang that 'I Really Love You.' Aiyo, I just bawled." Then she glanced at her son and shook her head. "Look at him, then look at you. When will you sing something like that for your dad and me?!"

His third sister teased, "With that lousy voice my brother has, even if he tries to sing, would you want to listen?"

His mother nodded in seriousness. "True. I guess he better not sing then."

His family all laughed.

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes again and tapped his third sister on the head. "How dare you trample over me?"

When they were about to reach the exit, they could suddenly hear arguing.

People were squabbling outside the door!

There were over a dozen young men and women shouting and screaming outside!

"This is such a shady show!"

"You people rigged the results!"

"This episode's Masked King should have been Li Yu!"

"How can you eliminate Brother Li Yu?"

"Ah! This is pissing me off!"

"We need an explanation today!"

"When Brother Li Yu left the stage, he was so crestfallen! You people were such bullies!"

"Get your boss out here right now!"

"Right, call your boss out here!"

These dozen or so people blocked the staff exit and did not budge for anyone. With them there, none of the staff could leave!

A few employees on the King of Masked Singers program team staff were trying to talk sense into them.

"What are you doing?"

"This is a staff zone!"

Someone had called the security guards and they came over.

When the security guards were about to chase them away, Li Yu's fans started shouting!

"Don't you dare touch me!"

"The security guards are hitting us!"

"Someone, come here!"

"Are there any reporters?! This program team is shady as fuck!"

They were completely shameless!

More and more people had gathered by now!

It didn't matter if anyone came to chase them off or talk with them!

His third sister said, "What kind of fans are these?"

His eldest sister shook her head. "These people are so awful."

His father knitted his brows. "Right when we're about to go home too?"

Nobody could leave. Some of them were pointing at the door, while others could not hold back from complaining angrily.

However, that group of Li Yu's fans did not seem to hear anything and linked arms to blockade the exit. "If you people don't give a proper answer to Brother Li Yu, don't even think of leaving today!" It was the same bunch of people who had created trouble during the recording.

No one could do anything. Such irrational fans were the most difficult to deal with!

Zhang Ye could no longer sit back. He squeezed through the crowd and pushed forward.

His mother was taken aback. "What are you trying to do?"

His father said, "Little Ye!"

Beijing Television staff spotted Zhang Ye coming to the front and made room for him. "Teacher Zhang, look at them. Aren't they just trying to make trouble?!"

Being shady?

Even if there were someone being shady, it would be Li Yu!

Here, in full view of the crowd, Zhang Ye made his way to those diehard Li Yu fans who had formed up a human chain to block the exit.

When they saw that it was Zhang Ye, all of them were stunned and instinctively took a step back.

Zhang Ye simply stood there and stared at them without saying a word.

"You!"

"Uh..."

"Cough, ahem."

Those people immediately lost their hostility.

A boy in the group tried to speak. "Brother Li Yu was—"

A companion next to him quickly pulled at him. "Let's go."

The boy said angrily, "Why do we need to leave?"

That person whispered, "That's Zhang Ye."

Zhang Ye.

The hooligan of the entertainment industry that everyone was afraid to encounter!

Causing trouble? Beating someone up? Scolding others? He had

done all of that before!

They knew that they could be unreasonable with other people because they were sure that Beijing Television's security would not risk laying a hand on them, and neither would the staff in front of them try to do so. But Zhang Ye was different. If he decided to get rough, he would even curse at the president!

"This isn't over!"

"W-We'll talk about this another time!"

"Just you wait!"

A few of them acted tough and shouted a few threats before turning tail!

Zhang Ye turned around to his parents and three sisters. "Alright, let's go."

A bunch of the bottlenecked staff didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Thank you."

"Thank you, Teacher Zhang."

"Teacher Zhang still commands the most respect around here."

"Director Zhang, thanks for your hard work."

"Haha, your appearance still works best!"

They had shouted at the troublemaking fans, called security, and even threatened to involve the police, but none of that worked. In the end, when Zhang Ye came over and stood there, the fans left without uttering another word!

His third sister blinked hard, then giggled. "So your reputation really is that infamous, huh, Brother?"

Zhang Ye had no response. What are you even saying!

When the staff around them heard that, they broke into fits of laughter!

"Pfft!"

"Hahaha!"

Chapter 1031: The third episode is broadcast!

Saturday.

Evening.

The third episode of King of Masked Singers was about to be broadcast.

After the last two episodes' build up, the show was getting more and more popular. Those who had not noticed or viewers who were not optimistic about the show at first were now attracted to it with the massive amount of talk the show had generated. Coupled with Li Yu revealing himself before this episode was recorded, the discussions on Weibo had exploded since yesterday after everyone knew that he was competing in the show. With today's official broadcast, it had pushed the show to its highest point on the trending lists!

"It's starting!"

"I'm so looking forward to it!"

"My Brother Li Yu!"

"Someone mentioned that Li Yu got eliminated?"

"Damn, you really believe that?"

"Haha, it must be a rumor."

"Even if Brother Li Yu did not get crowned as Masked King, he definitely wouldn't get eliminated. Are you stupid? How can you believe that?"

"That's right. There isn't even anyone who can eliminate as a talented singer as Li Yu on this stage, unless it's someone on the level of Zhang Yuanqi, Chen Guang, or Fan Wenli!"

However, when they saw that Petal Shower won her match

against Li Yu, many people went crazy for a moment. It was totally unbelievable!

"What?"

"Goddammit!"

"Petal Shower won?"

"This..."

"There's really no doubt about her victory!"

"Petal Shower must have been on adrenaline today!"

"Uh, I think I know who Petal Shower is. At the very least, it should only be a select few candidates!"

"Petal Shower's singing was wonderful!"

"Sunflower cannot be blamed for this loss."

Still, there was no one who felt that Li Yu would get eliminated.

Then, it was The Clown's turn to take to the stage.

"'Life's More Than the Grind'?"

"Pfft, isn't this face smacking?"

"Fuck!"

"Damn, The Clown is way too mean!"

"Yeah, Li Yu just lost, but he's kicking him when he's down?"

"Aiyo, I'm so entertained by this song!"

"Does he need to be so ruthless?"

But they had yet to find out that the even more ruthless event was about to place.

The Clown admitted defeat!

A lot of the people were dumbfounded by this decision!

"Admit defeat?"

"What's he planning?"

"Oh my god!"

...

Within the music industry.

At a recording company.

Many people's expressions changed.

"The Clown intends to go into the elimination round?"

"H-Has he gone crazy?"

"He hasn't gone crazy! He wants to verse Li Yu!"

"Isn't that crazy? He has no chance of winning against him!"

"Unfortunately, he already did."

"How do you know?"

"Yesterday's industry news. I heard that Li Yu's hand was forced to the point that he didn't even take off his mask and left the stage in dejection!"

"That's impossible!"

"I don't believe it either. Could it be a rumor?"

"Hur hur, just wait and see then."

...

At a talent agency.

Today, many people were watching King of Masked Singers while working overtime. It was not that they were lazing around, but that they had been tasked by their boss to do so. Ever since the premiere, this show was no longer treated as just a simple entertainment show. It had become an industry benchmark and a case study to follow.

"When did such a person pop up in the music scene?!"

"Who is this Clown guy?"

"Can we sign him?"

"How mysterious!"

"We don't even know which celeb he is!"

"I've already contacted some of my friends at Beijing Television, but their mouths are all zipped shut and they won't reveal any information. It's possible to guess who the other singers are as there are some likely matches, but there are zero details when it comes to The Clown! If we want to sign him from his previous agency, we'll have to establish his identity first!"

...

On Weibo.

"'I Really Hate You'?"

"Li Yu has finally sung a Cantonese song!"

"Yeah, he's finally used his trump card!"

"Haha, he's definitely going to win!"

"The Clown was too confident. He should be dumbstruck now, right?"

"Li Yu sang well!"

"Yeah, Li Yu performed well!"

"Ah, it's The Clown's turn!"

"What's this song about?"

"Fuck! 'I Really Love You'? Is he trying to contradict Li Yu?"

"When was there ever such a song? Is this yet another one of his originals? Where did he get so many originals! Who could've written all those songs for him?"

"Oh my god!"

"It's a Cantonese song!"

"It's a fucking Cantonese song!"

"The Clown is competing against Li Yu with a Cantonese song?"

"Heavens!"

"Is he crazy?"

"When it comes to singing Cantonese songs, who can beat Li Yu?"

"Yeah, how many years has Li Yu been singing Cantonese songs? Does he think it's funny to do the same? Isn't this a joke?"

"Stop chatting. Listen to it!"

"This song...this song..."

It suddenly went quiet online!

When the viewers listened The Clown's performance on television, they were all stared and their jaws dropped!

"It's great!"

"Holy shit, it's so good I'm crying!"

"Please permit me to say 'I really love you'?"

"This singing...my fuck!"

"Can, can the song be any more amazing than this?"

"It's time to vote!"

"He won!"

"The Clown won!"

"Li Yu really got eliminated? Fuck, I still thought that that was a rumor!"

"Is The Clown even human?"

"There's really no question about him winning!"

"By performing this song, how can he expect anyone to compete against him?"

"He can't really be a Hong Kong singer, right?"

"Uh, your home's in the northeast? On the Songhua River? He said that he is a northeasterner?"

"Pfft, do you guys really believe that?"

"This dude is full of bullshit!"

There was an explosion of comments on Weibo!

The results of the third episode's competition exceeded everyone's expectations. In no time, the Internet was filled with discussions related to this episode of King of Masked Singers. Whether it was on Weibo or the forums, they were similarly flooded with messages!

...

The next day.

The viewership rating of King of Masked Singers was out!

The third episode had once again ushered in a significant increase to the viewership rating and was steadily climbing!

The staff of Beijing Television were bursting with joy. Meanwhile, the King of Masked Singers program team staff were just as excited, and their celebratory cheers could even be heard in the hallway outside their office!

The Top Chinese Music Chart was also updated!

On this day, the Top Chinese Music Chart was once again dominated by King of Masked Singers!

#1: The Clown's "I Really Love You."

#2: Petal Shower's "That's Me."

#3: The Clown's "Life's More Than the Grind."

From the fourth to the twelfth place, more than half of the songs were from King of Masked Singers.

Although Petal Shower became the third episode's Masked King and it was her first time getting the title, the number one song on

the Top Chinese Music Chart still belonged to The Clown. In fact, it was far ahead based on the statistics. "I Really Love You" had even shot up directly to the fourth spot on the monthly chart, with the second and third spots also belonging to The Clown at this moment. They were "Wild Rose" and "Opera," respectively, both of which had charted for more than a week now. According to this momentum, there was no doubt that "I Really Love You" would take the place of the monthly number one. It might even storm onto the annual chart! Petal Shower followed closely behind. No one else on the entire chart was a match for these "masked series" of singers!

It was too popular!

The show, its singers, and the singers' songs had all become extremely popular!

Even a lot of the well-known musicians and producers in the industry were tongue-tied and wide-eyed!

Chapter 1032: The Ugliest Celebrities Rankings!

Monday.

Zhang Ye woke up early.

Zhang Ye browsed the latest Celebrity Rankings Index and saw that his popularity had dropped a little again. Actually, it was not considered a drop as the popularity scores still rose. However, if it rose too slowly or remained constant, then with the other celebrities' overall popularity scores rising, it caused his popularity to appear like it had dropped. Although King of Masked Singers was created by Zhang Ye single-handedly, he was not credited as the show's executive director nor was the host. He did not even appear onscreen. As a result, even though King of Masked Singers became popular throughout the country, the popularity it gave to Zhang Ye was limited. On this point, he was not surprised and even felt that it was expected, so he did not treat it as something serious at all. As long as he did not go down in the rankings, things would be fine.

Zhang Ye turned his attention to the other celebrities.

Amy's popularity had soared.

Yao Jiancai's popularity had soared.

And it was the same for Chen Guang as well.

The judges who were part of the guessing panel on King of Masked Singers all experienced an increase in their popularities due to the show's vast exposure and viewership. This was the most prominent for Dong Shanshan. As the show's solitary host, her position was a special one. Although she did not have many lines in the entirety of the show, she gained the greatest increase in her popularity score!

It was the same for the contestants who had revealed their

identities.

After "King of Oddity" was eliminated in the first episode, his popularity kept rising and there were constant inquiries for him to take on commercial appearances. There was even talk about how his value had increased by 50%. "Yesterday's Daylily," who revealed himself two days ago, also saw a surge in his popularity. In today's morning news, it was revealed that he was going to hold a nationwide concert tour, and his talent agency was already promoting it heavily. Before this, Yesterday's Daylily's popularity would at most enable him to hold a medium-sized concert in a first-tier city like Beijing. But now, he was talking about holding a nationwide concert, though the attendance numbers were still in question.

What about The Clown?

Petal Shower?

Sunset Glow?

As far as they were concerned, everyone knew that once these people took off their masks to reveal themselves, there would definitely be an explosion in their popularity. It would assuredly be much more than all the contestants whose identities were already revealed put together. And their popularity was still accumulating right now. As for who the final winner would be, it all depended on the latter part of the competition to see who could remain until the end and be crowned as the grand champion of King of Masked Singers in the grand finals!

In any case, the show had made a lot of people even more popular than they used to be.

Of course, there was also an exception, Sunflower Under The Starlight—Li Yu.

Li Yu also gained an increase in his popularity, although it was not enough for him to get back onto the A-list Celebrity Rankings.

Based on Sunflower's popularity and momentum before this episode, if Li Yu had revealed his identity onstage, his popularity should logically have experienced the greatest increase. But no one could have expected the factors of the competition to change so unpredictably. Who could have thought that Li Yu would lose so badly after Petal Shower and The Clown worked together to "team kill" him? The Clown was even the most vicious of all, kicking him while he was down, then repeatedly "kicking" his face so badly to the point that Li Yu wouldn't even remove his mask and just left the stage quietly. His Weibo had remained inactive ever since. This incident affected his popularity greatly and had paid the price twice over. Not only did his popularity not increase by much, his reputation was tarnished as well. He was now getting farther and farther from the A-list rankings and was unlikely to make a comeback anytime soon.

That about summed it all up.

Zhang Ye was still in a good mood and was humming a tune in bed.

Di di.

The chat app notification on his cell phone sounded.

Someone had mentioned him in the Goof Group.

Ning Lan: "Boss Zhang, are you still unemployed?"

Zhang Ye sent a smiley face. "I've been sitting idle at home."

When he looked at the chat history, he saw that a lot of messages had accumulated. Although this group consisted of the Heavenly Kings and Queens, as well as A and B-listers, it was always very active with the chat members constantly shooting the breeze. As Zhang Ye was not much of a chatty Cathy, he had muted the group some time ago.

Ning Lan: "Sister Zhang was looking for you."

Zhang Ye wondered: "Hm? What's the matter?"

Zhang Yuanqi popped out. "I'd like to ask you about someone."

Zhang Ye typed: "Ask away."

Zhang Yuanqi: "Who's The Clown?"

Zhang Ye got anxious for a moment and lied: "I don't know either."

Ning Lan: "Aren't you on the program team?"

Zhang Ye: "I was only in charge of pre-production. I didn't take part in the production itself."

Zhang Yuanqi: "@ChenGuang What about you, Old Chen? Do you know?"

Chen Guang also appeared. "I'm just a judge. If Director Zhang doesn't know, all the more I wouldn't know. I've also been trying to guess who The Clown is. Actually, the entire music scene is trying to guess who he is!"

Fan Wenli showed up. "Does anyone have any idea at all? I'm also curious."

Spring Garden's Xiaodong: "Hehe, Sister Fan. Tell us the truth, did you go on King of Masked Singers?"

Fan Wenli: "I didn't."

Ning Lan harrumphed. "Liar!"

Fan Wenli: "..."

Chen Guang tried to change the subject. "Xiaodong, did Li Xiaoxian from your group go on the show?"

Xiaodong: "How would I know?"

Chen Guang: "You don't even know about your team member?"

Xiaodong: "And you don't even know about your wife."

Chen Guang: "Pfft!"

Ning Lan: "Boss Zhang, did you write those songs for The

Clown?"

Zhang Ye blinked several times. "No."

Ning Lan: "Is that so? @HuoDongfang Was it your company's Old He who wrote the songs?"

Huo Dongfang appeared as well. "I don't think so? Old He rarely writes songs for people he doesn't know."

Zhang Yuanqi: "What if it's someone he knows? All of The Clown's songs were each better than the last. It's impossible for them to have come from nowhere, right? Quick, please tell me if any of you know who The Clown is."

Chen Guang: "Tell me too. I'm already planning to work with him!"

Ning Lan: "Old Huo, are you The Clown?"

Huo Dongfang: "Ah? What are you talking about!"

Xiaodong: "Eh, why do I get the feeling that Sect Leader Huo is guilty? Could it really be you?"

Huo Dongfang: "..."

There were all sorts of guesses and random accusations.

Then, a big shot actor said: "Stop talking about The Clown. Old Li is still in this group, so let's leave some face for him, hur hur."

"Hai, Old Li sure was unlucky."

"Forget it. Let's not talk of it."

Everyone stopped speaking about it. Although a lot of them felt that Li Yu had indeed handled the situation improperly, they would still leave some face for him. However, they knew that Petal Shower and The Clown were not to blame for getting mad over the issue either.

"Eh? There's a poll on Weibo again?"

"Oh, it's that!"

"Haha, it's time for that poll again?"

"What poll?"

"There's a link posted. See for yourself."

Zhang Ye tapped it in curiosity. Weibo's front page popped up onscreen with a headline that was extremely eye-catching. It turned out to be a celebrity attractiveness rankings poll held by Weibo, similar to the annual Most Popular and Unpopular Celebrity Awards poll that was also organized by Weibo around the Chinese New Year period.

There was always a lot of attention on these two polls each year.

At 12 noon, the domestic celebrity attractiveness rankings poll officially began!

The chat messages in the Goof Group were flooding in.

Xiaodong: "Who participated in this poll last year?"

Huo Dongfang: "Ning Lan was last year's champion, with Sister Zhang coming third while I was ranked eleventh? Or was it twelfth?"

Ning Lan was a little embarrassed. "My company helped to boost my votes to create hype back then as I had an upcoming movie. Please don't mention it anymore."

Zhang Ye asked naively: "You can even do that?"

Ning Lan: "What did you think?"

Zhang Ye: "This industry is a real mess."

Xiaodong: "Pfft! Teacher Zhang, you're also part of the industry, alright!"

Chen Guang reminded everyone: "Hur hur, how can Director Zhang possibly be in the same industry as us? Have you ever seen a person as carefree as him in the entertainment industry?"

Ning Lan: "I'm not going for it this year. Old Chen, why don't you

help your wife contend for it? It would do her popularity good."

Chen Guang: "She has no chance. I think I have a better chance."

Ning Lan: "Dream on! I think you're better off contending for the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings."

Chen Guang: "..."

Zhang Ye asked: "There's even an ugliest category?"

Ning Lan: "Of course there is, Boss Zhang. You really don't pay much attention to the entertainment industry's affairs, do you? Although it's not an official ranking, there's always been a great deal of interest in it. The winner's sure to make a few headlines."

Zhang Ye mocked himself. "I've been busy fighting people at all times since I've entered the entertainment industry. Where would I have the time to pay attention to any of these things?"

At this, everyone cramped up with laughter!

"Hahahaha!"

"That's true!"

"In the entertainment industry, the only person I'll submit to is Zhang Ye!"

"Yeah, when'll you change that temper of yours!"

...

In the afternoon.

His parents had made lunch.

Zhang Ye was browsing Weibo while eating at the same time.

His mother asked, "Can't you eat normally? What are you so distracted with?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I heard that there's a ranking poll that's quite the talking point, something about a 'Beautifulest Celebrities Rankings' poll that ranks celebrity by their looks. I

wanna see if I'm in the rankings."

His mother rolled her eyes. "Why don't you eat instead."

His father was speechless for a second. "What looks do you have?"

When Zhang Ye finally found the poll, he saw that he was indeed not in the rankings. There hadn't been much attention on him recently, and he had barely had any public exposure as well, so his topicality naturally decreased.

On the Beautifullest Celebrities Rankings poll.

First: Zhang Yuanqi (720,000 votes)

Second: Hu Xue (650,000 votes)

Third: Petal Shower (610,000 votes)

A Heavenly King was fourth.

And Huo Dongfang was seventh.

Dong Shanshan had actually gotten into the rankings as well and was ranked 17th.

Hu Xue was a female C-list celebrity who looked very pretty, but she wasn't considered very popular. Obtaining such a spot in her first appearance in the rankings was probably the result of getting outside help like what Ning Lan had done last year. What surprised Zhang Ye was that Dong Shanshan and Petal Shower had also appeared in the rankings. Dong Shanshan being in the standings was understandable since she was quite beautiful and was currently the host of the highly popular King of Masked Singers. But what about the third place Petal Shower? She had not even shown her face yet, so how could the audience know whether she was good-looking? Could it be that everyone had already guessed who Petal Shower was? But that wasn't possible!

Then, Zhang Ye moved his hand and tapped on the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll to browse through it.

As of 12:30 PM.

The rankings were as followed:

First: The Clown (990,000 votes)

Second: Zhang Ye (710,000 votes)

When Zhang Ye saw the rankings, he slammed his chopsticks onto the table and nearly cursed out loud!

His mother was shocked. "What's the matter? You're in the rankings?"

Zhang Ye went green with anger!

"Let me see." His mother took his cell phone and looked. She chuckled. "The Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll? You're in second place? Pfft! This isn't too bad. It shows that the people's attention is still on you. Although you don't have a job right now, your fans are still thinking of you."

Zhang Ye fumed, "What's the use of this kind of attention!"

His mother pointed at the screen. "Alright, alright, you're merely in second place. Isn't there someone who's preventing you from becoming first?"

At the mention of this, Zhang Ye almost burst into tears!

Your sister!

First place is also me!

Chapter 1033: Someone provokes The Clown!

Goof Group.

The big names in the group were engaging in intense conversation.

"Sister Zhang is in first place now."

"But she's not leading by much."

"Little Hu is catching up too? Oh, that's right, she's promoting her new show right now."

"Haha, quick, go and take a look at the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll."

"Ah?"

"Aiyo, Boss Zhang has gotten onto the list again!"

"In the Most Unpopular Celebrity Awards poll a few months back, Zhang Ye took first place without a doubt. Pfft, and now he's in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll too? Second place? Not bad, not bad."

"I'm dying of laughter."

"Boss Zhang's social skills are terrible!"

"Who told him to offend that many people!"

"Yeah. Just two days ago at Beijing Television, he drove away those fans of Old Li's as well?"

"Why is The Clown also on the poll? He's even in first place?"

These people sounded rather happy.

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes and typed: "Don't bother me. I need some quiet time."

This has gone too far! Why do I always end up on the negative

polls? In the past, it was OK since the worst that could happen was me taking first place. But look at this now! I've taken both first and second place!

...

On Weibo.

The netizens were laughing nonstop!

"Zhang Ye has appeared once again!"

"Hahahaha, there are always bits of Teacher Zhang in these polls!"

"I nearly pissed myself laughing!"

"Why did everyone give their votes to Zhang Ye? Teacher Zhang might not exactly be handsome, but he still looks decent and is considered average!"

"Teacher Zhang has offended too many people. Just look at those comments of many of Li Yu's fans, all scolding him and voting for him. They're even calling on others to vote for Zhang Ye in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll, so it'd be a wonder if he didn't have a ton of votes. But I'm not surprised that Teacher Zhang got second since those diehard fans of his are all people who enjoy such polls and would surely have voted for Zhang Ye as the ugliest celebrity. That's just how his fans are, treating Zhang Ye more ruthlessly than others would, haha. But why would The Clown be in first place? That's something I can't work out!"

"The Clown purposely conceded so that he could head into the King of Masked Singers elimination round to knock Li Yu off the show. That alone is enough for all the hate, so how would Li Yu's fans not answer the call?"

"That's true."

"Besides, [the idea of a clown](#) is already pretty ugly!"

"Actually, I've done some analysis and found that The Clown is

likely not good-looking either. Why? Here's my explanation. We've stated before that The Clown mentioned on the show that he's at least a B-list celebrity. But after speculating for the longest time and with all the comparisons, there wasn't anyone on the B-list and above who could sing that well or even someone who matches his figure. Coupled with him singing those lines of 'My ol' home is right in this hamlet' and 'My home's in the northeast,' we know that his words are untrustworthy. Rather, we should consider him a nonsensical person who isn't even a B-lister to begin with. Therefore, I have reached my conclusion. A person who can sing this well and has such good songs but still isn't at least a B-list celeb? He's managed to stay unnoticed by the audience all this while? There can only be one reason for this. His looks are probably not that good, or perhaps even ugly, so even if he could sing great, no one bothered to listen to him. Thus, he went unnoticed all this time!"

"Godly analysis!"

"Good reasoning!"

"Right, that's very logical!"

"Wow, you're right!"

"Holy cow, godly prediction there. Give us your name!"

"Name yourself! This thread will definitely go viral!"

When this analysis was posted, a lot of those who read it felt that it was a very justified and on point argument.

As a side effect, The Clown's votes increased even further. By 1 PM, The Clown was far in the lead in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll!

Meanwhile, the Beautifullest Celebrities Rankings poll was still a very close and intense competition.

"The Clown has already secured first place!"

"Hahahahaha!"

"Yeah, there's no more suspense to the results!"

"If there's anyone who could catch up, only Zhang Ye has a chance!"

"Teacher Zhang, we're cheering you on!"

"Go, go, go, The Clown!"

"Let's see which of them will get ranked as ugliest!"

...

At home.

Zhang Ye nearly vomited blood a few times as he browsed through the Weibo comments!

Fight for the ugliest?

Fight, my ass!

They're both fucking me!

Who the hell came up with this poll? Could they be any more mean than this? Who in the world voted for me? Could they be any more awful than this?! His own fans, Li Yu's fans, the fans of those celebrities he had offended, all of them were rushing to vote for him. Zhang Ye had no words!

And yet, someone decided it was the perfect time to come and provoke him!

Due to the masked singers not being able to reveal their true selves, Beijing Television had even prepared some verified Weibo accounts based on their stage names. However, these accounts were not really used much other than the times some of the singers used them to say a few words of gratitude after they were eliminated.

Out of the blue, someone posted on one of these Weibo accounts.

The Weibo name was: Masked Singer "Flowing Time."

Those who had watched King of Masked Singers until the third episode would know that "Flowing Time" and another contestant were the replacement singers for the fourth episode. They had been given a special introduction in a clip of the next episode's preview. In the clip's introduction, Flowing Time had left the deepest impression on everyone. The narration introduced him as someone who only came onto the show after great efforts by the program team to invite him. He was a very famous singer in a niche genre in the industry and had very few rivals in his field. As such, after the audience had seen the preview, a lot of them started guessing as to who Flowing Time was.

But today, Flowing Time had fired a direct shot at The Clown: "I've been a good friend of Li Yu's for many years. After watching the third episode, I can't help but say a few words. Is this a tag team competition? How could Petal Shower and The Clown take turns like that? There was even a need to admit defeat so that he could get into the elimination round? Is such behavior even allowed in the rules? And Petal Shower and Spinach switching their appearance orders, isn't that horrible?"

This Weibo post resonated with quite a few of Li Yu's fans!

"Those two bastards!"

"Right!"

"This is going too far!"

"It was a tag team tactic!"

"Brother Li Yu was cheated by them!"

"Especially that Clown, he's vile!"

"Well said! Supporting Teacher Flowing Time! There's finally someone who's willing to put in a fair word for Brother Li Yu! I can see that The Clown is not a good person. Just look at how he's already first place on the Ugliest Celebrity Rankings poll!"

"Li Yu lost in such an unfair manner!"

"Teacher Flowing Time, please avenge Brother Li Yu!"

"Right, kill The Clown!"

"Destroy him!"

Of course, more of the reactions were questioning voices.

Quite a few people who saw the post were shaking their heads.

"Li Yu broke the rules by paying for PR campaigns and revealing himself. If you want to criticize others, why don't you criticize that so-called good friend of yours of many years instead?"

"Li Yu is clearly a sore loser."

"After asking for all those votes, he still lost?"

"I don't think that Petal Shower and The Clown went overboard!"

"That's right. Li Yu was in the wrong to use his popularity to crush the other contestants. How laughable. Why are there still people trying to seek justice for him?"

"Haha, someone who doesn't side with reason has made an appearance!"

"No wonder he's good friends with Li Yu! These two people are cut from the same cloth! They can't even differentiate between right and wrong? Or are they pretending not to know?"

In reality, the problem Li Yu caused had been resolved some time ago. After Beijing Television broadcast the third episode, a statement was released to announce that Li Yu had breached his contract, thus his agreed upon joining fee would be reduced by half. On top of that, Beijing Television's higher management also expressed that they would no longer collaborate with Li Yu. Li Yu's team had yet to comment on the matter.

The media reported this.

The fans discussed it.

But no one expected that someone would come and "defend" Li

Yu at this time. It was even one of the replacement masked singers scheduled for the upcoming episode!

It could be seen from this that Flowing Time and Little Yu's relationship was especially good. And Flowing Time posted on Weibo again. "What's happened has happened and whatever's said won't matter, so I won't harp on it. @MaskedSingerTheClown Dare you compete honestly against me in the next episode? Dare you accept my challenge?"

The netizens were puzzled.

"Who's that?"

"He's talking this arrogantly?"

"Hur hur!"

"Could it be another big shot?"

"That might be possible!"

"This person should be a somebody."

In the end, the Weibo of Masked Singer Petal Shower showed that she came online. She replied: "I don't think it's nice to send a Weibo like this, is it? An honest competition? You make it sound like the match we had was not honest. If you're unhappy for Li Yu, let's meet onstage. What's the point of saying all this?"

The conversation stopped at that.

The reason for that was because the posts on Flowing Time's Weibo were deleted very quickly after that. The same happened for Petal Shower's Weibo, so obviously, Beijing Television intervened. Such negativity and infighting among the show's contestants were definitely not something they wanted out in the open. These Weibo accounts were all officially registered by Beijing Television, so they naturally could delete any posts or take back the singers' access rights.

But the netizens had already taken screenshots of the exchange.

Instantly, another uproar broke out on Weibo!

"Flowing Time wants to challenge The Clown!"

"Yeah, the next episode is gonna be exciting!"

"Who could Flowing Time be?"

"He's definitely a famous singer in the industry!"

"Haha, the next episode's competition is going to be intense as well!"

"Where does Flowing Time's confidence come from?"

"Li Yu's good friend? Li Yu has too many friends, but if it's someone who is very close to him, there seems to be only one person? Could it be his sworn brother, Zhao Qiquan?"

"Ah?"

"Teacher Zhao Qiquan?"

"Aiyo, that might be possible!"

"Their tempers are also alike. The two of them are of the same mind!"

"I was wondering how he could be so bold. But if it's Zhao Qiquan, then that's just how he is!"

Zhao Qiquan.

A famous [Hokkien](#) singer.

In this world, Hokkien songs were considered a very niche market in the music industry. Not many people sang them and there weren't a lot of good songs either. However, there were still famous Hokkien singers around. If there had to be one representative of Hokkien singers, then Zhao Qiquan would definitely be the first person to come to mind! In the genre of Hokkien songs, Zhao Qiquan indeed had no rivals. He was even very popular as a Hokkien singer and had a large score of diehard fans from the region!

Could it be him?

If it was him, it would be really difficult to say who would win and lose!

The Clown had been singing for three straight episodes, and starting contestants who made it this far into most singing shows would enter an audience appreciation fatigue period. The audience would know the style of the singer and how well they could sing by this point, so there was nothing fresh for them to look forward to. Unless you could step it up in your singing, or come up with something novel, it would be very difficult to impress the audience. But it was exactly at this time that the incoming contestants had an advantage since the audience had not seen them before. As a result, as long as they could perform good enough, the audience would love them!

And since Zhao Qiquan was obviously a supporting pillar of the Hokkien music scene, there were no doubts about his singing. There was also no one who could compete against him in this market, making him a unique personality in the industry!

...

It was late afternoon when Zhang Ye found out that somebody had openly challenged him.

The Goof Group also discussed this event.

Ning Lan: "Is it really Zhao Qiquan?"

Huo Dongfang: "It's probably him. I heard from a friend that Zhao Qiquan sidelined all activities this week and said that he would be coming to Beijing, so it should be him."

Xiaodong: "Big Brother Zhao is quite the rash person!"

Chen Guang commented: "But he's a very strong competitor."

Zhang Yuanqi said: "In the area of Hokkien music, it's all about Old Zhao. If the audience truly gets impressed by his performance,

The Clown might not be able to beat him."

When he read that, Zhang Ye chuckled in spite of himself.

I can't beat him?

Bullshit!

Zhang Ye was in a terrible mood today. Yes, if anyone placed first in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings, they wouldn't be in a good mood either. And now that someone had come to provoke him over an obviously unreasonable matter, how could Zhang Ye not get angry!

Think "[Grotesque Whiteface](#)"

[Hokkien](#)

Chapter 1034: Getting his hands on his girlfriend's house keys!

Tuesday.

Early in the morning.

Zhang Ye had set his alarm the day before. When he woke up, the first thing he did was check on the Weibo organized Beautifullest and Ugliest Celebrities Rankings polls. The voting had ended and the results were published!

The Ugliest Celebrities Rankings polls: First: The Clown (10.7 million votes) Second: Zhang Ye (8.85 million votes) Third: Zhao Xiaoyan (2.7 million votes) There were no changes to the rankings whatsoever. All that had changed was the number of votes, with the numbers increasing from before. Whether it was the first place Clown's votes or his own votes in second place, the tallies were several times higher than the third place's votes. There was essentially no suspense to the outcome!

The netizens were still gloating over it.

"Hahaha!"

"Teacher Zhang's ranked firmly in second!"

"I love what I'm seeing!"

"So The Clown still ended up in first place?"

"This result is defying all common sense!"

"Who voted for him? Damn, why are there so many votes?"

"I did!"

"I contributed 10 votes to The Clown from my household!"

"I contributed seven votes to my idol, Teacher Zhang Ye!"

"I registered several accounts and gave all my votes to The

Clown!"

"Pfft, do you guys have nothing better to do?!"

The Clown's name was really a hot topic now. Ignoring he was attractive or not for now, at least there were people who knew about him and paid attention to his happenings and thus gave him their votes. This was also a reflection of The Clown's current level of fame. This was not previously seen on Beijing Television's King of Masked Singers' official website when the show's contestants' popularity polls were held. The individual singers had each gotten hundreds of thousands of votes over several days at the beginning, which rose up to the millions later on. This was because the reach of Beijing Television's official website was small, and it was not accessed by everyone. But it was a different case for Weibo since virtually everyone had access to it. A singer who had not taken off their mask and who nobody knew could garner this many votes? This was a miracle that would never be replicated!

At home.

The main person involved in that poll was getting unhappy with the outcome and got up from bed listlessly.

His mother was sweeping the living room floor. "Eh, why are you up so early?"

Zhang Ye mumbled in response.

"I haven't made breakfast yet," his mother said.

"I'll go out and eat then." Zhang Ye yawned and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth.

His mother made a sound in understanding and said with a smile, "What's the matter? Are you still angry over the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings? Don't be bothered by it. They're all just having fun. Besides, this clearly shows that your popularity has not dropped."

Zhang Ye said, "I'd rather it dropped a little."

He changed clothes and went downstairs to get his car.

On the road, he called Wu Zeqing.

Du du du, du du du.

After four or five rings, the call finally connected.

Zhang Ye: "Old Wu, are you up yet?"

Wu Zeqing: "I'm awake now."

Zhang Ye: "Were you still sleeping? It's about time to go to work, isn't it?"

Wu Zeqing: "Yes."

Zhang Ye: "What time are you leaving?"

Wu Zeqing: "At eight, but I'll be eating breakfast first."

Zhang Ye: "Don't bother making it. I'm coming over now. I'll get you something on the way."

He heard a graceful sounding yawn. "Alright, I'll get changed then."

When he reached Old Wu's house, it was just a quarter past seven.

In the villa.

Wu Zeqing was already up and watering the plants in the yard.

Zhang Ye ran in. "Quick, eat it while it's hot. I got held up on the way here when someone recognized me. The breakfast stall's boss insisted that I give him a signature and even asked me in disbelief why a famous celebrity like me would eat breakfast. I didn't even know how to answer him."

Wu Zeqing laughed gently and set the things in her hands down. "Alright, what did you buy?"

"Soy milk and fried dough sticks, and there's also a tray of buns. Have whatever you like."

"You haven't eaten either?"

"Not yet. I just got up too."

They started eating.

The two of them sat at the table and shared the food.

As Zhang Ye ate, his gaze fell on Wu Zeqing's face. He was happy just to see her. "How's the taste? I bought this from that roadside stall on Taiping Street."

Wu Zeqing nodded. "It's pretty good." Then she smiled and looked at him. "If you're coming over in the morning next time, you don't have to go out of your way to bring me breakfast. There are quite a few people who can recognize you even if you have your sunglasses on, so just come over. There's food at home, and I can always make breakfast for you."

Zhang Ye said happily, "How would that do? You have to go to work early every day, so don't make yourself any busier than you have to. I'm just twiddling my thumbs at home nowadays anyway, so I have plenty of time."

After breakfast.

It was 20 till 8 AM.

Wu Zeqing suddenly said, "How do I look today?"

She was dressed in a bog standard gray women's suit over a white dress shirt.

Zhang Ye took a look, smiled, and said, "You look fine."

"Does fine mean middling?"

"Hai, you look good no matter what you wear."

"Why don't you help me to choose something to wear then?"

"Sure!"

"I don't even know what I should wear to work these days."

"Let me think for you. I'm a professional!"

Zhang Ye volunteered himself and went upstairs with Wu Zeqing. He went to her wardrobe and searched through it, even lowering his head to a drawer and opening it. In there, he saw undergarments of all kinds of colors before coughing and quickly closing it.

But Wu Zeqing did not mind and sat down next to him, smiling and watching him.

A moment later, Zhang Ye took a pair of pants off their hanger and walked over to Wu Zeqing, gesturing to her. "How's this? It's also gray, but it's slimmer than the one you're wearing. Those pant leg openings are wider and look ungainly. It doesn't seem all that put together."

Wu Zeqing glanced at it. "OK."

Zhang Ye nodded. "Here, change."

When Zhang Ye was about to leave the room to let Wu Zeqing get changed, he was startled to see that Old Wu had already taken her belt off with a click after taking the pants from him.

Ah?

She's taking it off just like that?

Zhang Ye got nervous and instinctively turned away. "I won't look. Please change."

"OK."

He could hear rustling behind him.

Zhang Ye could not resist the thought of turning around. Then he remembered that he had successfully proposed to her, so what would it matter if he turned? If Old Wu did not avoid him or say anything, why couldn't he just watch?

It would be such a waste to not look!

After a moment's struggle, Zhang Ye turned around.

He even tried to cover his actions. "You're done?"

Her new pair of pants were up to her fair and supple thighs, although they weren't fully put on yet and just slightly above her knees.

"Almost," Wu Zeqing said.

Zhang Ye blinked.

Wu Zeqing finally put her belt back on.

Zhang Ye snapped his fingers. "These pants look good!"

Wu Zeqing walked to the mirror on the front of her dresser and took a look. Then she smiled and said, "Yes, this is pretty good. I'll wear this." She glanced at her watch and turned around, saying, "Alright, I've got to get to work. Any later and I'll be late."

Zhang Ye said, "Hurry up then."

"That's right," Wu Zeqing said as she suddenly walked to her nightstand. She pulled open the drawer and took out a set of keys for Zhang Ye. "These are the keys to my house. Whenever you wish to come over, you won't need me to open the doors for you anymore." She pointed at a large number of keys at the top of the set and said, "This is for the main door, this is for the gate to the yard, this electronic one is for the garage, this one is for the master bedroom on the second floor, and this is the master key for the cabinets, although I don't usually keep those locked."

Key to her house?

Zhang Ye held the keychain in his hand. "Are you serious about giving this to me?"

Wu Zeqing asked, "Why?"

"Nothing." Zhang Ye smiled. "Then I'll tuck them away."

Wu Zeqing said, "OK. Don't rush to get a job. Take a break for a

while."

Zhang Ye said, "Thanks."

Wu Zeqing said, "If you're still sleepy, you can sleep here before you leave. You can sleep in the other room or my room, whichever one you prefer. I'll be leaving now."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I won't see you off, then. If someone spots me sending you to work early in the morning, I bet the entertainment industry will blow up!"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Alright."

This was no joke.

If someone found out that Zhang Ye and Wu Zeqing were going to get married?

The SARFT would be thrown into disarray!

The entertainment industry would be tossed in chaos as well!

Note:

Some of you might be wondering about the Hokkien Language. The word Hokkien literally means Fujian (a province) in the Minnan Language, which is the official name of the Hokkien dialect. Most online references to the language refer to it now as Hokkien, and is generally understood to refer to this dialect.

Do read up more on the language [here](#).

Chapter 1035: Teaching Taiji!

In the morning.

After Old Wu had gone to work, Zhang Ye stayed at her home and started thinking about which songs to sing on the show. He had to come up with two songs for the upcoming episode and practice them, as well as get a sense of how they'd do.

There were some songs that were indeed good songs and classics, but they were unsuitable for him as everyone's voice was different. There were just some things in singing that you couldn't control. The timbre of vocal registers was also different, leading to a different type of feel which would determine whether that song was suitable for him or not. Zhang Ye had to try singing first before he would know. It was fortunate that Old Wu's villa had good sound insulation. He didn't need to worry that anyone would hear him. He could just sing as he desired, and even if he screamed, no one would care. Unlike at home. If he were to sing a little louder than normal there, the neighbors upstairs and downstairs would surely complain.

This song sounds fine.

Well, this song seems good too.

He decided on a tentative four songs that he was quite satisfied with for the time being. As he could feel his voice tiring, he walked out of the villa and locked up before driving off. Since he had nothing to do at home, he decided to drive over to Rao Aimin's and Yang Shu's place to have a look. He realized he hadn't been there in quite some time.

Jiaomen East.

When he drove into the neighborhood, he was stunned by what he saw.

In the neighborhood's public square, over a hundred people stood

in formation and were holding stances. There were all kinds of people in the dense crowd, with elderly men and women accounting for at least half the numbers. There were also young and middle-aged men and women, and some parents even brought their ten-year-old children with them. The district's public square was very large but was almost entirely packed by these people. This formation of people was as large as you could imagine it to be.

What's going on?

Is there a multi-level marketing meeting taking place?

Or is it a plaza dance event?

Then Zhang Ye spotted Yang Shu. Yang Shu was standing in a stance that was different from the others. She stood facing everyone and was shouting some commands at them. Occasionally, she would gesture like she was demonstrating something.

"Relax your shoulders! Don't tense them up!"

"Uncle Sun, your stance is wrong!"

"Auntie He, don't keep your knees so straight!"

"Little Wang, your stance is too rigid. Loosen a little! That's it!"

"Come on, everyone, copy my stance!"

Yang Shu shifted stances.

The crowd tried to imitate her.

"Do as I do."

"Teacher Yang, is this correct?"

"That's correct, Little Zhou. Well done."

"Master Yang, what about me?"

"You're a bit off. Continue to work hard."

"Alright!"

Only now did Zhang Ye understand what was going on. These

people were all shadowboxing, which was a simplified form of Taiji Fist. He was rather dumbfounded and rapidly parked his car. When he got out of his car, he observed them from afar for a short while. Every previous time Zhang Ye came here, he would get recognized by people and they would walk up to greet him. After all, Zhang Ye had lived here for quite some time and was considered a part of the community. However, no one recognized him today, probably because no one noticed him in the first place. They were all practicing Taiji under Yang Shu's guidance. Some people would take their child and leave the square from time to time to bring them to school. At the same time, people from other neighborhoods would come over and join the crowd, making the number of people gathered here increase!

Ding.

Behind him in the building's foyer, the faint sound of the elevator arriving could be heard.

Chenchen's voice suddenly rang out, "Zhang Ye, what're you doing?"

Zhang Ye turned around and saw Rao Aimin dragging Chenchen as they came out of the foyer. He immediately said in surprise, "I was watching them practice. What's going on here?"

Rao Aimin was clearly about to send Chenchen to school. "It's been going on for many days now. That junior sister of yours started teaching those people how to do Taiji some time ago. At first, it began with just one or two people learning from home. Then, two days later, even people from the nearby neighborhoods were attracted to her. Quickly take her in hand. Estate management has already come to me several times. If this carries on, the neighborhood's public square will be out of space soon."

Zhang Ye wondered, "How did she get so many people?"

Rao Aimin tilted her chin upward toward Yang Shu. "Did you forget about your apartment's windows getting smashed? When

Little Yang jumped out from upstairs to chase after the crooks and took the three of them on all by herself, many of the neighbors witnessed it. On that very night, someone approached Little Yang to learn kung fu from her. She taught him a few moves and then it ended up like this, with more and more people joining."

Zhang Ye was secretly surprised. "She seems quite charismatic, doesn't she?"

"Within one kilometer, there had better not be anyone who speaks ill of your junior sis. If they do, they'll get ganged up on and scolded by a bunch of people." Rao Aimin glanced at him. "Even your influence in this area is no match for her anymore. Alright, enough talking. I have to send this kid to school."

Rao Aimin led Chenchen away.

Zhang Ye quickly called out, "I'll be eating lunch at your place at noon!"

"Yeah, yeah," Rao Aimin said impatiently.

Chenchen yelled to Yang Shu, "Old Yang, I'm going to school."

As Yang Shu turned to look and wave at her, she spotted Zhang Ye. Taken aback, a look of embarrassment appeared on her face as she busily instructed the crowd of people. She coughed, then shouted to them, "Alright, that's all for today. Go back home and practice on your own what you learned today. If you can't grasp the gist, practice more and you'll be fine. If you really still can't get it, you may come back and find me tomorrow. That's all then."

"OK!"

"Thank you, Teacher Yang!"

"Little Yang, thanks for the hard work."

"Master Yang, thanks for all your work."

The crowded started dispersing and went their separate ways. Some of them were even sharing their experiences as they left.

Yang Shu timidly walked over to Zhang Ye. "Senior Bro."

Zhang Ye said expressionlessly, "Let's go upstairs and have a talk."

Upstairs.

In the apartment.

The moment they entered the apartment, Zhang Ye put on a stern face and criticized, "Taiji Fist is a martial arts meant for fighting. In this modern era, a lot of the other martial arts are being promoted as something to practice for the strengthening of one's body and mind. But as to what it really is, I would have expected you of all people to know better! Strengthening of one's body and mind is just a secondary effect. Taiji Fist's primary goal is to inflict hurt on others and stop an enemy's attack. There were so many people downstairs just now, but did you question if any of their characters and minds are suitable to learn the art? Were you just going to teach any person that came along? How could you do that? What if you teach them and they use what they learned to go out and commit evil? There were so many of them. Did you test them one by one?"

Yang Shu lowered her head. "I was just teaching them some simple moves, not real Taiji."

Zhang Ye said, "You call that simple? The set of moves you taught included techniques that could hurt others. Besides, with so many elderly uncles and aunties learning, you actually risked teaching them? What if something happens to them while they're practicing what you taught them? Are you going to take responsibility? That set of moves is totally unsuitable for older people! Something will surely happen if they keep practicing it!"

Yang Shu lowered her head even further and didn't make a sound.

Zhang Ye got angrier as he went on, pointing at her and saying,

"You're really daring, huh, not even discussing something this important with me?"

Yang Shu muttered, "But you weren't around."

"Oh, so you can run wild just because I'm not around?" Zhang Ye said, "Luckily, I came back today and found out early. If I came back a month or so later, there'd surely be trouble!"

In Zhang Ye's previous world, the Taiji Fist that people popularly knew about was the simplified version of the original. It could be said that it was almost no different from common aerobic exercises and was indeed practiced to strengthen one's body and mind. There weren't any techniques that contained any lethality and they all existed in many styles, like the Yang forms and Chen forms. But none of these techniques were considered true Taiji Fist since the true form was an internal style, the purpose of which was to stop an enemy's attack, and had a deadly lethality. Anyone who did not have a martial arts background and was too advanced in age would only hurt themselves if they blindly practiced an internal style. Of course there were exceptions, but for most people, this was definitely not a good thing. Practicing an internal style was absolutely not simple! That was the reason why a lot of internal style martial artists did not teach the people outside of their schools. Even if they did, they had to see who the person was and judge if they had the moral character to learn the martial art.

Yang Shu did not speak.

Zhang Ye was afraid that she would not know the seriousness of the matter, so he rambled on for over half an hour. "Don't go around teaching other people anymore. Today will be the last time!"

Rao Aimin came home from sending her kid to school.

She pushed the door open and came in after hearing the yelling. "Whoa, you're still on about it?"

Yang Shu finally raised her head. "I was just hoping to spread the art of the Taiji Fist, that's all."

"There are many other ways to spread the art!" Zhang Ye reproached, "You're too anxious to achieve that and brought harm to others in the process!"

"I'm not!" Yang Shu bit her bottom lip, feeling aggrieved.

Rao Aimin smacked her lips and mediated, "Alright, alright, it's not that big a deal. But Little Zhang is right. You shouldn't be teaching internal style martial arts to people so easily. It's not that we're keeping this knowledge to ourselves and refusing to share with others, but that learning an internal style can be quite harsh. If it isn't practiced properly, it can cause one's body a great deal of damage." Then she added, "But I've also seen the set of moves Little Yang was teaching, and they're very simplified. Although, some of the moves, even if not to the extent of causing harm, are still not suitable for the middle-aged and elderly to learn since the movements are too sweeping."

Yang Shu looked at her. "Then, Master Rao, how can we further simplify Taiji Fist so that we can teach it to everyone?"

Rao Aimin spread up her hands. "It's not like I know anything about your Taiji branch of martial arts. There's only the two of you in this world that know Taiji Fist, so why are you asking me?"

Yang Shu immediately looked to Zhang Ye. "Senior Bro."

Zhang Ye said, "What?"

Yang Shu said, "You must know."

Zhang Ye said in exasperation, "Why would I know?"

"Can you help me simplify the moves of Taiji Fist?" Yang Shu said seriously, "I would like to let everyone learn it. Just look at our neighbors, all of them really enjoyed practicing it!"

Zhang Ye sat down on the sofa without replying.

"Senior Bro." Yang Shu quickly poured him a cup of tea and brought it to him with great respect. "Have some tea."

Zhang Ye took it from her and drank.

Yang Shu said, "I understand what you were trying to tell me just now. I was too anxious and I realized that I was wrong. Senior Bro, please guide me."

Chapter 1036: Hiring a female bodyguard!

Giving him tea.

And pouring water.

Yang Shu kept herself busy while she helplessly watched Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye knew that his junior martial sister had a one-track mind and was a somewhat rash person. If there was something she had made up her mind about, she would see it to the very end no matter what anyone had to say. Thinking about it, it was her life's goal to glorify the martial art of Taiji Fist. After arriving in Beijing and depending on him for so long, all she could do was stay at home doing nothing and also occasionally borrowing some money from Zhang Ye. Yang Shu probably felt dejected with nowhere and nohow to expend her energy. With people suddenly recognizing her, all the neighbors and even people from the nearby neighborhoods were now coming to learn Taiji Fist from her. They even kept addressing her as Teacher Yang or Master Yang, so Yang Shu certainly found value in this and also saw it as a way to promote Taiji Fist to the entire country, and perhaps even to the world. Naturally, she was being very diligent about it.

"Senior Bro!

"Senior Bro.

"Please teach me.

"Senior Bro!"

Zhang Ye was just about to speak.

However, Rao Aimin smirked and said, "Even if you beg him, it might not necessarily lead to anything. He has to first know how to go about doing it."

Are you trying to goad me?

Hur hur!

Do you think I'll fall for that?

Hmph! Alright, I'll really fall for it!

Zhang Ye stared at her. "Hey, who says that I don't know how?"

Yang Shu's eyes lit up. "Senior Bro, you really know how?"

If it were anyone else, they would probably not know how to go about handling this. It would not only require a lot of time to plan to simplify a set of internal style boxing techniques into something that could be practiced by the ordinary people, but would also require time to continuously refine and tweak it. Without spending three to five years, it would be impossible to complete the simplification. This was because it wasn't purely about simplifying the moves. After doing that, there was still a need to bring it in line with the essence of Taiji Fist and reflect the discipline behind it. Therefore, it was an especially difficult task, especially if a person was a master Taiji Fist martial artist. As they were already at a more advanced stage, it would be very difficult for them to see what the ordinary people were seeing.

But it was different for Zhang Ye since he was from another world. In his previous world, Taiji Fist had long since been simplified into countless versions. Whether it was the 42-form Taiji or the 24-form Taiji, Zhang Ye had seen it all. He even knew that the earliest 24-form Taiji, which was introduced in 1956, had used the Yang-style Taiji Fist as its basis for simplification. Further, the country was involved with its implementation at the time. Led by the Sports Administration in 1979, another version was introduced, the 42-form Taiji, which also used the Yang-style Taiji Fist as a basis but added the essence of other Taiji Fist styles. These were the two forms of Taiji Fist mainly practiced by the people in his previous world.

So he decided that he would teach her.

There was nothing to hide anyway.

Zhang Ye got to his feet and said, "Watch carefully."

Yang Shu immediately widened her eyes in interest.

Rao Aimin narrowed her eyes and also watched with great interest.

"This is the 24-form Taiji Fist!" Zhang Ye then demonstrated the opening stance!

First form: Initiation.

Second form: Part the Wild Horse's Mane.

Third form: White Crane Spreads Its Wings.

Fourth form: Brush Knees and Twist Step.

He executed the movements in a flowing motion!

Yang Shu was dumbfounded by what she was seeing!

Rao Aimin's eyes narrowed even more.

Zhang Ye continued, "Next, this is the 42-form Taiji Fist!"

Initiation!

Grasp the Sparrow's Tail, Right Side!

Single Whip, Left Side!

Raise Hands!

As he went through the stances, he finally reached the closing stance.

Zhang Ye asked Yang Shu, "How much can you remember?"

Yang Shu replied, "I've memorized everything!"

Zhang Ye was stunned. What? She had memorized everything? Did she need to be so full of herself? He said in disbelief, "Then show it to me. I want you to show me both the 24-form and 48-form sets."

"Yes, Senior Bro!" Yang Shu seemingly turned into another person and looked sharp. She demonstrated both sets without missing a thing!

Only then was Zhang Ye convinced.

This was what talent was. It wasn't worth it to compare people.

Yang Shu said excitedly, "Senior Bro, was that OK?"

Zhang Ye's eyebrows rose a little as he nodded and said, "It was very good."

Suddenly, Rao Aimin looked at Yang Shu and said, "Are you interested in learning from me? Transfer to the Eight Trigrams Palm? I can guarantee that you will achieve the usage of concealed power within half a year."

Yang Shu was stunned. "Ah?"

Zhang Ye panicked. "Hey, hey, hey, what's the meaning of this, Old Rao? Are you trying to steal my people?"

Rao Aimin smiled and said, "Your junior sister is a very talented person and quite suitable to learning the Eight Trigrams Palm. Her foundations are there and she has also attained great understanding, so it's not a problem for her to start learning the Eight Trigrams Palm now."

Even though Zhang Ye wasn't that fond of his freeloading junior martial sister and would talk to her impolitely at times as well as order her around, Zhang Ye would definitely not allow Old Rao to openly try stealing her from him. "There are so many disciples in the Eight Trigrams Palm School, and only two left in Taiji, so why are you trying to steal her from me? Have you no heart?" He immediately said to his junior martial sister, "Don't listen to her and continue practicing Taiji Fist. There's no point in learning some random lousy fist and palm techniques."

Rao Aimin looked at him. "Who are you saying has lousy fist and palm techniques?"

Zhang Ye stared at her and said, "Whoever tries to steal my people!"

The two of them nearly got into a fight.

Yang Shu quickly said, "Senior Bro, Master Rao, please don't argue. Master Rao, thank you for your kindness. Taiji Fist was handed down through my family, so I definitely wouldn't learn any other martial arts."

Zhang Ye nodded his head firmly. "That's the right way!"

Even if Rao Aimin's social ties were extremely poor in the Chinese martial arts world, she was still a grandmaster. Besides, other than Chenchen, she had not taken any disciples of her own yet. When he learned that Old Rao was eyeing Yang Shu, Zhang Ye was truly afraid that his junior martial sister would get stolen away. It wasn't easy for him to get a fellow junior martial sister, was it?

Rao Aimin stopped trying and turned away. "You can look for me anytime if you want to learn the Eight Trigrams Palm. Oh right, come over for lunch this afternoon."

Yang Shu said, "Thank you, Master Rao."

Zhang Ye asked, "What are we having for lunch?"

"You're not invited!" Rao Aimin strolled off.

Zhang Ye had no response.

Later that morning.

Zhang Ye taught some more simplified Taiji Fist sets to Yang Shu.

Yang Shu virtually did not need him to repeat his demonstrations as she could almost always remember the routine after observing it just once.

Zhang Ye was fully satisfied and felt that Yang Shu was becoming more and more pleasing to the eye. "That's about it. Take some

time to digest what I've taught you. As for how you want to teach it to others or which sets to teach, I don't care. You can decide by yourself."

Yang Shu gave a fist and palm salute to him and said sincerely, "Thank you, Senior Bro!"

Zhang Ye said in amusement, "We are both practitioners of Taiji, so why are you still being so polite with me?"

Yang Shu nodded solemnly. "Alright, then I won't be so polite with you." Then she looked at him and said embarrassedly, "Senior Bro, can you lend me some money again?"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "You're broke again?"

Yang Shu said, "Yes."

Zhang Ye said, "You didn't collect any money for teaching Taiji Fist?"

Yang Shu said, "They all liked Taiji Fist a lot, so I-I was too embarrassed to collect any money from them."

"Then how can you ask money from me?"

"Didn't you say that I didn't have to be so polite with you?"

"Did I say that?"

"Yes, you said that just now."

"I've already forgotten."

"Senior Bro."

"Fine, fine. I got it already. Here, take it."

"Thank you, Senior Bro."

Seeing her in such a miserable state, Zhang Ye couldn't bear refusing her. When he thought about that, he took out all of the money in his wallet, which totaled over 10,000 RMB. "Alright, I'll give all of this to you."

Yang Shu furiously waved it off. "I don't need that much."

Zhang Ye said, "I'm not sure when I will be coming over again, so just keep it for now. Remember, if you run out of money or meet with any troubles in the future, let me know"

Taking the money from him, Yang Shu nodded. "Senior Bro, you're really nice."

Zhang Ye said indignantly, "Cease with the niceties. They're useless against me. You should find a job in your free time. You have to be able support yourself before you can teach others about martial arts."

Dispirited, Yang Shu said, "I've interviewed, but nobody needed me."

Zhang Ye asked curiously, "What kind of job did you interview for?"

"A bodyguard position," Yang Shu said.

Zhang Ye said in surprise, "Ah?"

Yang Shu spoke angrily, "When they saw that I was a woman, they did not even give me a chance for an interview."

Zhang Ye chuckled. "As a Chinese martial arts master, why would you need to interview to be a bodyguard? Who could hire you? Even the head of state wouldn't have such a privilege, no?" His junior martial sister probably did not think of it that way. But Zhang Ye knew that with Yang Shu's skills, she would belong to the top of the Chinese martial arts world. She also practiced Taiji, and could even be considered the most authentic successor to Taiji Fist in this world, yet she wanted to become someone's bodyguard? How shameful would that be!

Yang Shu said, "But I only know kung fu and nothing else." She then thought of something. She blinked and asked, "Senior Bro, do you have a bodyguard?"

Zhang Ye said in bewilderment, "What are you planning?"

Yang Shu pleaded, "Let me be your bodyguard!"

Zhang Ye said in a speechless manner, "Will I be protecting you or the other way round?"

Yang Shu's excitement faded. "That's true. Your skills are so much better than mine, so you won't need anyone protecting you. Then I'll just keep looking and see if anyone requires a bodyguard."

Pfft!

You're still thinking about being a bodyguard?

Zhang Ye could no longer bear to listen and waved her off. "Come on! With your status, how can you think about becoming a bodyguard for others? Even if you don't feel ashamed, I feel ashamed for you! What about this? You can be my bodyguard and I'll call for you whenever I have any activities or matters to handle. You just need to shield me from the fans and reporters. As for your salary, I'll pay you 50,000 RMB a month for the time being, though that figure may rise in the future. That's right, do you know how to drive? Have you learned how?"

Yang Shu immediately nodded. "Yes!"

Zhang Ye decided, "Alright, it's settled then. In the future, you'll just need to drive and shield me from people. But of course, I won't call for you every day, so you can do whatever you need to as usual, since I won't need you for most situations. Open a bank account later and I'll transfer your salary to you every month."

Yang Shu was very happy. "Understood, Senior Bro!"

A celebrity with Zhang Ye's status would usually have bodyguards and a full-time chauffeur. Even if they did not hire anyone themselves, their talent agencies would still arrange it for them.

Today, Zhang Ye had finally gathered a full team of his own.

His agent was a Chinese martial arts grandmaster?

And his bodyguard and driver was a Chinese martial arts master?

In the entire entertainment industry, there was truly no one else who could assemble such a team!

Chapter 1037: Recording the fourth episode!

Friday.

In the morning.

On the day of recording the fourth episode of King of Masked Singers.

On the way to Beijing Television, Zhang Ye sat in the car with his heart in his mouth. It was Yang Shu's first time chauffeuring and bodyguarding today, and she was feeling quite nervous as well.

"Hey, hey."

"What's the matter, Senior Bro?"

"Drive slowly!"

"OK, Senior Bro."

"Hey, don't drive on the lane markers!"

"Yes, Senior Bro."

"Turn right, turn right here!"

"Understood."

"Are you sure you have a driver's license?"

"Yes."

It was obvious that Yang Shu was the kind of driver that had not touched a car since obtaining her driver's license. Furthermore, she was an extremely reckless driver just like her rash nature. She would keep driving straight at an extremely fast speed and was a typical example of those women drivers who would send a shiver down one's spine.

They arrived at their destination.

However, there were quite a few reporters clogging the entrance. Perhaps they had received some news or they had just been waiting

there, but when they saw the car, around seven reporters immediately piled toward it.

"It's a BMW X5!"

"It's the bulletproof version!"

"That's Zhang Ye's car!"

"Quick, quick, quick!"

As the car was blocked from entering, Yang Shu had to park outside.

Zhang Ye said, "Get out and shield them off for a bit."

Yang Shu immediately got out of the car. "Please, could all of you make way! Make way!" Yang Shu was dressed in a black suit and even wore a pair of sunglasses at Zhang Ye's request. She was dressed as a typical bodyguard.

Zhang Ye also got out of the car.

A male reporter immediately raised an audio recorder and asked loudly, "Teacher Zhang, King of Masked Singers is getting very popular these days. As the executive producer, you deserve the credit. Would you accept an interview with us at Beijing Times?"

Zhang Ye smiled and waved it off. "I just did the pre-production. I haven't contributed much to the show itself, so let's drop the interview. But you guys can arrange one with Director Hu Fei."

A female reporter squeezed her way over to him. "Director Zhang, the netizens voted you into second place a few days ago in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll. What are your thoughts on this?"

Zhang Ye walked forward while smiling. "I feel lucky that I didn't come in first place."

The reporters laughed.

"The Clown got first place. Do you know anything about this

contestant?"

"I have no idea."

"Can you reveal anything about The Clown to us?"

"I don't know anything."

"The replacement singer, Flowing Time, has issued a challenge to The Clown. Who do you think will win?"

"The competition hasn't even started yet. How would I know? Alright, I have to go to the program team now to discuss some things, so let's end it here?"

When Yang Shu heard Zhang Ye say that, she immediately took two steps forward and cleared a path for him. "Please make way, thank you."

A reporter had wanted to squeeze his way past her, but when Yang Shu held his arm that was holding a microphone, that burly male reporter looked dumbfounded as he got pushed back by her. Another reporter wanted to rush up, but Yang Shu used the same move to stop that person.

Inside a two-meter radius, no one could get close to Zhang Ye!

All the reporters were dumbfounded!

Who was that woman?

Did Zhang Ye hire a bodyguard?

And why was she so strong?

When he reached the television station's entrance, several security guards ran over to block the reporters and allowed only Zhang Ye in.

Zhang Ye turned around and told Yang Shu, "You can drive back. I'll probably finish in the afternoon or evening, so pick me up when the time comes."

Yang Shu nodded. "OK!"

A number of reporters got curious and quickly snapped some pictures of Yang Shu. Had Zhang Ye hired a beautiful female bodyguard? This was news too!

In the television station's courtyard.

Hu Fei and Xiao Lu saw what had happened.

"Zhang'er." Hu Fei waved at him.

Zhang Ye walked to him. "Why are there so many reporters out there?"

Hu Fei laughed and said, "The show is very popular. I was trapped out there for a long time too."

Xiao Lu chuckled, "Director Zhang, did you hire a bodyguard? What a beauty!"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "She's a friend of mine. Since she was sitting idle at home, I hired her to be my bodyguard."

Xiao Lu wondered, "Can a woman be a bodyguard too? Does she have the skills?"

"Her skills?" Zhang Ye said, "Against ordinary people, she could hold off more than 20."

Xiao Lu exclaimed, "That's such an exaggeration!"

Hu Fei also laughed. "More than 20 people?"

A woman?

And such a beautiful woman?

Hu Fei and the others did not believe it!

Zhang Ye just smiled without saying anything. There was no need to explain anything to these laymen. Even if he explained, they would not understand. Yang Shu was no ordinary bodyguard. Most celebrities whose bodyguards were tall and well-built—or knew some karate, taekwondo, or martial arts, or might even be retired soldiers—could not take even three attacks from Yang Shu.

She was the genuine successor of the Yang-style Taiji Fist, an internal style master who was more legitimate than Zhang Ye.

Hu Fei said, "Let's go in and talk. So, that day some of the contestants used our official Weibo accounts to make those posts, that was something we hadn't expected. When we finally got around to taking emergency actions to stop it, it was already too late."

Zhang Ye said, "It's fine. Just treat it as promotion."

Hu Fei looked at him. "Do we need to tell the masked singers to stop posting with their Weibo accounts?"

"There's no need." Zhang Ye said, "It's unnecessary, so let the contestants settle it themselves."

Hu Fei snapped his fingers. "OK, I'll take your advice."

Although Hu Fei and the King of Masked Singers program team had produced a lot of shows, the scale of those past shows had always been very small. They had never taken part in a project that had such a huge investment and had never produced a dominant show with such high nationwide viewership ratings before. Only Zhang Ye had experience doing so, even on more than one occasion. As such, Hu Fei went to Zhang Ye for his opinions on a lot of matters. Having known each other for so long, there wasn't really anything to be embarrassed about. Everyone wanted this show to succeed!

...

An hour later.

As Zhang Ye finished his work, Hu Fei and the program team staff started getting busy with theirs. So Zhang Ye disappeared from sight and changed into The Clown's costume and mask.

After a phone call, Han Qi rushed over.

"Aiya, Teacher Clown!"

"I'm sorry I was late."

"The band is waiting for you."

"OK, I'll head over straight away."

He had already rehearsed one song yesterday and needed to rehearse the second one this morning.

On the way over, Han Qi rambled on.

"That Ugliest Celebrities Rankings thingy was pure nonsense."

Zhang Ye smiled.

Han Qi said angrily, "You haven't even revealed your face yet, so how could they mess around like that? How could they vote you to first place in the polls? And it's even in some Ugliest Celebrities Rankings?! They have really gone too far!"

They bumped into Dafei and Hou Ge.

Dafei stood still. "Teacher Clown, you've arrived?"

The Clown greeted him.

Dafei said, "Please don't be bothered by that poll."

Hou Ge added, "It's just the netizens joking around."

Han Qi said, "Just joking around?! That was downright insulting!"

The Clown said, "It's fine."

The masked Sunset Glow happened to come out of the rehearsal room at this exact moment.

The two of them saw each other and exchanged a few words.

"The Clown?"

"Hello."

"Are you actually unattractive looking?"

"In any case, I'm not handsome."

"Oh, I'm not pretty either."

Han Qi was wondering why Sunset Glow would straightforwardly ask someone whether they were unattractive. But when she heard her next words, she realized that Teacher Sunset Glow was taking a different tack to comfort The Clown.

The impact of the poll that was organized on Weibo a few days ago was still huge. Many people had participated in it, which was obvious from the millions and tens of millions of votes cast. Zhang Ye had gotten second place in the Ugliest Celebrities Rankings poll, but everyone already knew that he was quite an unconcerned man when it came to such things. Moreover, he had frequently featured as one of the front runners in many of these negative rankings before, so everyone was used to it. But as it was The Clown's first time in such a poll, everyone was unsure whether he had the mental fortitude to cope with the result. After all, not everyone could be as carefree as Zhang Ye. For example, if it were any other male or female celebrity who gained this title of being the ugliest, they would have long since cursed and sworn.

Chapter 1038: An unforeseen situation at the venue!

The door closed.

The rehearsal room cleared out.

The Clown started rehearsing.

"Teacher, you're still not going to sing the lyrics?"

"Yeah."

"Alright then, let's begin."

"Thanks, everyone."

The reason why Zhang Ye kept insisting on not singing during rehearsal was that he did not want to consume too much of his emotion and fervor. He was the type of competitor who would always do things spontaneously, which required him to be in the right condition to perform well. Sometimes, the more times a song was sung and the more focused one was, the easier it was to lose the original feeling for the song. That would only lead to a worse live performance compared to what was practiced during rehearsal. No singer could keep singing a song with fully invested emotions since they would get sick of it if they sang it too many times. So Zhang Ye needed to restrain himself as he hoped to leave his best performance for the actual stage.

Music Director Bai Yuanfei and the Miracle Wheels band members were used to this. However, when they got the score and saw the title of the song, they glanced at The Clown.

Eh, this song?

It's something worth looking forward to!

Half an hour later, they finished rehearsing after practicing the song about four times. Zhang Ye did not waste any time as the next

contestant was still waiting their turn. After thanking the band, he got ready to leave the rehearsal room. When he opened the door, he saw an unfamiliar man wearing a mask and resting on the sofa outside. His mask looked very similar to Zhang Ye's own mask. It was a very artistic, silvery mask and even had some ethnic cultural elements emblazoned on it. It was clear that the mask had been meticulously created by the designer. His costume was very colorful and eye-catching as well.

Who was it?

Could it be Flowing Time?

As Zhang Ye studied him, the other person did the same.

That person stood up and looked straight into The Clown's eyes. "You should've seen what I posted on Weibo, right? You even admitted defeat just so that you could eliminate Old Li. Was there really a need to go that far?"

It was Flowing Time.

Zhang Ye chuckled.

Flowing Time said, "I don't like you."

Zhang Ye grunted.

Flowing Time said, "You're a Mainlander, right?"

Zhang Ye still did not say anything.

Flowing Time said, "Since when did it become popular for Mainland singers to sing Cantonese songs? Were you deliberately trying to knock Old Li out? We're all fellow industry peers. Did you need to be so extreme? You didn't even leave some face for him? Or leave some leeway for yourself? I also sing minority language songs. If you're so capable, why don't you sing another Cantonese song later?"

Zhang Ye gave him a look. "Are you done talking?"

Flowing Time said, "Yes, for now."

Zhang Ye curved two fingers up, one after the other. "First, I'll decide by myself if I'll sing a Cantonese song or not and what song I will sing. I don't need you to tell me that. Second, if you're here to defend Li Yu's actions, feel free to do so. But there's no need for so much nonsense. Let's leave it all on the stage." He turned around and walked away.

Flowing Time shouted after him, "Sure! Let's meet on the stage!"

When they walked far off, Han Qi, who was beside Zhang Ye all this while, said angrily, "Is that guy crazy?"

Zhang Ye said, "Who knows?"

Han Qi said, "Li Yu's punishment has already been decided. He was the one who didn't abide by the rules and interrupted our show's progression. Does he even think he has a case here?"

Zhang Ye threw his hands up.

Han Qi asked, "Is that really Teacher Zhao Qiquan?"

"I don't know."

"Since he said that he sings minority language songs, then he might just really be Zhao Qiquan. A lot of netizens were guessing that it's him. Teacher, I'll be cheering you on. Beat him!"

Zhang Ye nodded. "Mm."

...

Online.

There was a press release with a picture attached.

"Zhang Ye's Mysterious Female Bodyguard!"

"Wow!"

"What a beauty!"

"Yeah. Although I can't see her face clearly since she's wearing those sunglasses, from her profile and that figure, she must definitely be a beauty. Did Teacher Zhang hire a bodyguard?"

"A female bodyguard? Is she just for show?"

"Who knows? I heard that Teacher Zhang's newly hired agent is also a very beautiful woman!"

"Teacher Zhang has offended too many people. I guess it was about time for him to get a bodyguard."

"All I care about right now are the results of King of Masked Singers' fourth episode!"

"Who on earth is The Clown?"

"The industry is still guessing as well. No one knows who he is!"

"Flowing Time has challenged him. If it's really the Hokkien singer, Teacher Zhao Qiquan, then it will surely be interesting to watch. It would be even more wonderful if they end up fighting!"

"I wonder what song The Clown will be singing today."

"I'm so looking forward to Flowing Time's performance!"

"I still prefer Petal Shower!"

"Haha, I'll be headed to the studio soon for the recording."

"Ah, does the previous poster have a ticket?"

"Yeah, I got it through my company."

"I'm so jealous of you!"

"You gotta stream from the studio!"

Even before the show's recording, it had drawn the attention of the people!

As long as it was a topic related to the King of Masked Singers, it would be hotly discussed!

...

In the afternoon.

At Beijing Television, the drawing of lots began.

Before long, the matchups and appearance sequence for today were set.

The order of appearance was as followed: First: Spinach

Second: Flowing Time (Replacement masked singer) Third: Marshal Persona (Replacement masked singer) Fourth: The Clown

Fifth: Petal Shower

Sixth: Sunset Glow

It was not yet time for the audience to be admitted into the venue. There was still plenty of time until then.

As such, Executive Director Hu Fei decided to organize a simple tea party at a small backstage dining area and invited all of today's contestants. Afternoon tea was served with some snacks, even including red wine. "This is the first time that all the contestants have gathered together. Let me briefly introduce our two new replacement singers. This is Teacher Flowing Time, and this is Teacher Marshal Persona. So then, everyone please feel free to have some tea and chat, hur hur. This part will not be broadcast anyway."

Marshal Persona was the first to greet everyone. "Hello, everyone. I'm a newcomer. Nice to meet all of you."

From his voice, he didn't sound that young. He was perhaps in his 30s or 40s?

Flowing Time smiled and said, "You don't sound like a newcomer."

Marshal Persona laughed but did not say anything.

Petal Shower looked at Sunset Glow. "The two of us are facing each other today."

"Please go easy on me." Sunset Glow smiled shyly.

Petal Shower smiled and said, "I was about to ask you the same. I'm not in too good a shape today."

Sunset Glow looked off to the side. "Then today's main event will have to be between The Clown and Flowing Time."

The Clown simply shrugged it off.

Flowing Time chuckled, saying nothing.

When the others heard that, they also looked at those two. Everyone already knew about the provocations by Flowing Time on Weibo and wanted to find out who would be the better singer between the two of them. But as they were not matched against each other, they would not get to meet each other in the first round. So the prerequisite was that the two of them had to get through the first round before they could meet in the second round.

Outside.

In the recording studio.

The audience had started to line up in advance to get into the studio.

"Wow, the venue is so big!"

"The set design is really nice."

"This is all Zhang Ye's creation. I heard that Teacher Zhang personally decorated the set."

"It's just somehow better with Zhang Ye taking part in the production. He's currently the country's best television show director and producer after all."

"Ah, is that Dong Shanshan?"

"It's her, it's her. She's testing the microphone?"

"Where's Petal Shower?"

"And where's The Clown?"

"Don't bother looking for them. They're definitely backstage."

Suddenly, a large group of people arrived from outside. They all

seemed like they knew each other and were even wearing the same outfit, which had a company's name printed on it. A rough estimate put about 70 to 80 people in the group. When they opened their mouths to speak, they were all talking in Hokkien!

The audience members around them all turned to look at them.

Many of the program team staff were momentarily stunned.

With The Clown attending the tea party, Han Qi was left with nothing much to do. So she came over to the studio to help out with work. However, when Han Qi witnessed this, she started to feel a little panicked and went to look for Dafei immediately.

Han Qi tugged at him. "Brother Fei!"

Dafei turned around. "What's the matter, Little Han?"

Han Qi pointed to the audience. "W-Why are there so many Fuzhounese?"

When Dafei saw this, he also found it a little odd and went to check with someone. Only then did he learn what was what was going on. He said to Han Qi, "They're from a company based in Xiamen and are a second-tier advertising sponsor for our show. They had asked for some tickets from us, so Brother Hu allocated 70 to 80 tickets for them. We originally thought that they were going to organize a lucky draw to give away the tickets, which was what they had claimed as well. We hadn't expected that their company employees and families would come to Beijing for a meeting. They decided to organize a tour while they were in Beijing and now they're here. The majority of the employees are from Xiamen, and they speak Hokkien over there."

Han Qi asked, "Then will they be allowed to vote as well?"

"Of course," Dafei said.

Han Qi was badly worried now. She ran off to look for The Clown. When she got there, the tea party had just ended. "Teacher Clown, come with me, quick. There's something urgent!"

Back in the waiting room.

The Clown asked, "What's the matter?"

Han Qi said, "There are nearly a hundred people in today's audience who speak Hokkien!" She related the matter to him and asked, "What should we do now? If Flowing Time is really Teacher Zhao Qiquan, then he's one of the best Hokkien singers around. Wouldn't those hundred votes go to him almost by default? How could anyone compete with him if that's the case? Just think about it. If the abilities of two people are on par and the 500 audience members vote equally for each person, that will give them each 250 votes. Even with a slight deviation, ten votes would already be a huge margin, not to mention a hundred votes. But fortunately, Hokkien songs are slightly more niche. Other than this hundred people from the Xiamen sponsor company, the rest of the audience members would probably not—"

All of a sudden, someone knocked on the door.

Han Qi went to open the door.

Xiao Lu was standing outside. She quickly said, "I won't be going inside. Just let Teacher Clown know that a company from Chaoshan with roughly 40 to 50 people has arrived. They came to Beijing for a meeting a few days ago. The program team hadn't expected that these two groups would come to the recording session together. I'll be going as I still need to inform the other singers. We've made a mistake in our planning by not properly arranging for the attendees."

Han Qi was a little confused. "What's about the company from Chaoshan?"

The Clown spoke, "Teochew is a branch of the Min language. There's about a 60-70% similarity."

Han Qi exclaimed, "What?"

Xiao Lu sighed. "That's the issue I'm talking about."

The Clown said calmly, "I understand."

"We're terribly sorry," apologized Xiao Lu before leaving in a hurry.

"How can that happen!" Han Qi said, "Those 70, 80 people are already enough to mess the results up, but now there are another 40, 50 others? Wouldn't that be over a hundred people in total? Wouldn't today's stage become Flowing Time's home field then?"

Previously, the program team had been very particular with the audience composition. For example, when it came to age demographics, they would not only get young people to attend. They would invite people of all ages from their teens to their 50s. As for gender, it would basically be half-and-half with at most a 10% difference. As for the language they spoke, this was not a consideration at all. Since this was the Mainland, they couldn't possibly bring in half the audience from Hong Kong and the other half from the Mainland just to show that they were fair to the Cantonese singers. Moreover, Cantonese songs were quite mainstream and well recognized by Mainlanders, so there was no need to do that. As such, what was happening today was indeed unexpected. No one had expected that such a coincidence would happen, that so many people who spoke Hokkien would come to attend the recording! And from the apologetic attitude of Xiao Lu, it was crystal clear who Flowing Time was. He was definitely a Hokkien singer!

The other contestants gradually learned about it as well.

Petal Shower did not say anything.

Sunset Glow simply acknowledged that she understood.

Spinach had the biggest reaction. She felt she didn't need to take the stage anymore!

A lot of people were wondering if all of this was planned by Flowing Time himself. Could he have happened to know the CEOs

of those two companies? So he got them to ask for more tickets for people to cheer him on? And that was why he dared to openly challenge The Clown on Weibo even though he had already been crowned Masked King twice?

Was that how it was?

No one knew!

In any case, the other contestants could only be sure of one thing: In these circumstances, it was going to be too difficult for anyone to beat Flowing Time!

Chapter 1039: Who is his opponent?

In the recording studio.

All of the audience had taken their seats; the cameras were about to start rolling.

Dafei found his way over. "Brother Hu, some contestants have expressed their views on the matter."

Hu Fei sighed. "What did they say?"

Dafei smiled wryly. "Last time it was Li Yu, now it's Flowing Time. One of the masked singers said that if she were allowed to bring people from her hometown to attend the recording, she could even beat Petal Shower and The Clown!"

"Brother Hu, what do we do now?" Xiao Lu came back after informing the contestants.

Hu Fei said remorsefully, "What else can we do? All we can do is record. Since everyone has arrived and they're from our sponsors, we can't possibly chase them off, right? We only have ourselves to blame for not clarifying and asking clearly what they needed the tickets for when they requested them. We just assumed that they would use it for a nationwide lottery event. If it was that, the gender and geographical demographics would've been more evenly distributed. Hai, we can only blame ourselves for being inexperienced at handling such a large singing variety show like this one. That's why it led to a series of consecutive problems occurring like it had. It was all due to my negligence. If Zhang Ye had been appointed as the executive director, such things would not have happened! If I had known that it would be like this, I would have made him accept the position of executive director no matter what. I'd have just stuck to being the executive producer and supervised from the side! That would have been so much easier!"

Dafei immediately said, "We can't blame it on you. We don't have the necessary experience either."

Xiao Lu wondered, "Has Director Zhang gone missing again?"

"He probably went back?" Dafei turned and looked around.

Hu Fei said, "Let's just go ahead and record. Things can't be changed no matter what. I'll personally go and talk to the contestants after we finish recording. Come, we'll start record in one minute."

...

Applause rang out through the studio!

"Hello, everyone."

"Welcome to this episode of King of Masked Singers!"

"I'm your host—Dong Shanshan."

Many in the audience started to scream in excitement.

And a lot of the guys were wolf whistling.

This scene was not planned by the program team beforehand. They had not requested for the audience to clap and scream to enhance the recording effects, but was rather the most authentic representation of the atmosphere in the studio. As Dong Shanshan had gotten very popular now and the King of Masked Singers becoming the top rated show in the nationwide viewership ratings, everyone was very excited that they could come attend the live studio recording where they could also vote to determine the "life and death" of the contestants. Their emotions were running high right from the start.

Dong Shanshan was still wearing that black women's suit and those gold-rimmed glasses.

After a string of advertising messages, Dong Shanshan looked at the audience and said with a smile, "I saw on the Internet that a lot of people are asking me why I keep wearing the same outfit for

every episode."

Quite a few audience members looked at her curiously.

Dong Shanshan said, "It's because the program team does not have any money!"

In return, the audience heckled her!

"Yi!"

"Yi!"

"Hahaha!"

No money?

You're the richest program team in the country right now, alright?

Hearing that, Dong Shanshan looked at Yao Jiancai, who was seated at the judging panel, and said with a smile, "What a familiar sound this is! Teacher Yao, are they jeering at you?"

The other judges laughed.

Yao Jiancai pointed at Dong Shanshan. This Little Dong is even making fun of me now?

The host had a bigger part in the recording of today's episode. It was rare for Dong Shanshan to get the opportunity to say more than a bit during the opening speech, even though it was just a few lines. "I know that everyone has been waiting. Now, let's hand things over to the contestants, so please welcome our first singer onto the stage—Spinach."

The contestant was ready and waiting in the waiting area.

The audience started applauding!

"She's coming out!"

"It's Spinach!"

"She's the first one today?"

Spinach came onto the stage feeling a little unhappy. But she managed to recover from it very quickly after a few deep breaths while she stood onstage. Then she nodded at the band to signal that she was ready.

The music played.

She began to sing.

It turned out that Spinach chose a song that was based heavily on opera music and was aptly titled "Chinese Opera." There were parts of the song where it was sung in the controlled pitch style of [Peking Opera](#). When these notes went higher, the audience responded excitedly with round after round of applause!

When she finished performing, Spinach bowed and exited the stage.

Chen Guang exclaimed, "This?"

Wang Zhuishu was also stunned. "She is?"

"Now you know who she?" Zhang Xia said with a smile.

Chen Yidong said, "I think I've got it!"

"It's her?" Amy seemed to have recognized her as well.

Zhang Xia enjoyed a good relationship with Spinach, and they had worked together a few times as well. So Zhang Xia figured out who she was during the previous episode while the other judges finally guessed her identity today.

Yao Jiancai commented, "Her singing is quite good."

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "When she gets older, she'll definitely be even better."

Onstage, Dong Shanshan said, "Let's welcome our next contestant—Flowing Time."

The audience immediately cheered and screamed enthusiastically. Compared to the reception when Spinach came

onstage, it was louder by several times, especially in two areas where there were about a hundred people. Many of them were wearing the same outfit and were cheering in Hokkien for Flowing Time. Maybe they had also read the online news, but a lot of them probably assumed this person was Teacher Zhao Qiquan.

Amy looked into the crowd. "They're all speaking in Hokkien?"

"Why are there so many of them?" Yao Jiancai exclaimed.

Zhang Xia knew a little about this as she had heard from the program team staff before recording began. "They're employees from one of the sponsors." Then she filled them in on the situation.

Chen Guang said, "There are this many of them?"

Chen Yidong said, "It's gonna be very difficult for the other contestants to win."

"It's far more than very difficult." Amy said in a speechless manner, "If it's really Teacher Zhao who has come onto the show, then the results are already set, aren't they? He practically has over a hundred guaranteed votes!"

They thought the audience was too one-sided this time. Did they come and attend the recording session solely because of Flowing Time?

Flowing Time took the stage.

Applause sounded once again.

In the end, Flowing Time slowly pressed his arms down to signal the audience to be quiet and finally halted the applause.

Flowing Time smiled. At the same time, the music started.

Everyone was looking at him and waiting for him to open his mouth.

"Please look at me.

"Is this the person you loved so deeply?

"Why, when you were in your hardest times, did she turn to go?

"Please look at me.

"Is this the friend you trusted so much?

"Why, when you were down on your luck, did he never look back?"

It turned out to be a Mandarin song!

It was that very famous song called "[Please Look at Me](#)"!

The audience was very excited!

"It's in Mandarin?"

"Shouldn't he be singing a Hokkien song?"

"Could it be that he is not Zhao Qiquan?"

"That's not right, just listen to his accent!"

"His Mandarin has a Hokkien accent to it!"

"That's right, it's indeed so!"

"It really sounds like it's from that area!"

"It's really Zhao Qiquan!"

"This is awesome! His singing is so wonderful!"

"Looks like there's something to look forward to today! Teacher Zhao has really joined the show!"

"Haha, The Clown has met his match this time!"

The cheers of those Xiamen and Chaoshan people were especially deafening. The majority of them were Zhao Qiquan's fans and loved listening to Hokkien songs!

When Spinach saw this from the wings, she felt only a sense of powerlessness.

When he finished performing, Flowing Time bowed in thanks. He was clearly quite pleased with his performance today.

Spinach was then invited back onto the stage by the host, Dong Shanshan.

The judges began commenting.

Zhang Xia said, "They were both great, truly great."

Wang Zhuishu said, "I felt very satisfied listening to those two songs. They were quite enjoyable."

Chen Yidong said with a smile, "I like Spinach's performance more, and I think I have guessed who you are as well."

Spinach nodded in thanks.

Yao Jiancai said, "I prefer Flowing Time's performance more as I feel that he sang with deeper feeling."

"Each of them has their individual strong points, so it's really difficult to judge who was better." Chen Guang looked at them and said, "Hur hur, let's leave this difficult decision to the audience."

The styles of their songs were completely different with no overlapping qualities, so it was really quite difficult to say whose singing was better. Spinach was superior in terms of her clearer voice that had more carrying power, while her operatic parts had a very special feel to it. Meanwhile, Flowing Time was superior in terms of his experience and the control of his voice, and the projection of his emotions was quite good as well. Therefore, the judges considered the first match quite even. Even if Flowing Time was slightly better, the difference was not that great. But when the voting started and the outcome was shown, the judges fell silent!

The voting ended!

Spinach: 107 votes!

Flowing Time: 381 votes!

Flowing Time emerged victorious!

The difference was much too great!

Almost all of the audience had given their support to Flowing Time!

The program team staff looked at each other in dismay.

The other contestants who were in their waiting rooms looked downhearted!

Clearly, the audience has already recognized Zhao Qiquan through his slight accent and voice even though he had not sung a Hokkien song yet. He had only demonstrated a bit of his Hokkien accent through his Mandarin pronunciation, yet he had nearly four times more votes. With an advantage this overwhelming, if Flowing Time actually sang a Hokkien song, who would be his match?

This "home field advantage" he had was simply too great!

This song was performed in The Voice by one of the contestants in Chapter 614. The original singer is Zhang Yuanqi.

Chapter 1040: 'I'm Ugly But Tender'

It was time for the next matchup.

Marshal Persona vs. The Clown.

Yao Jiancai said, "This episode's battle for Masked King is going to be a difficult one."

Zhang Xia agreed, "That's right."

Chen Guang said, "Let's watch how this match will turn out."

Amy said, "Let's see which other two contestants will advance to battle Flowing Time for Masked King."

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Who is this Marshal Persona?"

Chen Yidong said, "His mask looks really good."

Marshal Persona had already come onto the stage, dressed in an overpowering, martial outfit that grabbed everyone's attention.

...

Backstage.

Zhang Ye did not get affected by anyone and was getting ready for his turn onstage. He closed his eyes and did some Taiji breathing exercises to calm his mind. No matter who his opponent was, no matter where the audience was from, all he needed to do was to sing to his best.

It was just that simple, no?

His impulsiveness gone, he was now in great shape.

A moment later, Han Qi knocked on the door and came in. "Teacher Clown, Marshal Persona is almost done performing."

After two seconds, Zhang Ye opened his eyes and stood up. "Alright, let's go."

Ahead of them was the waiting area. Surprisingly, Flowing Time

was standing there with his arms folded. No one knew if he was there to watch Marshal Persona perform up close or if he was waiting for The Clown.

Flowing Time looked at him. "I'll be waiting for you in the battle round."

The Clown glanced at him.

Flowing Time said, "But from the look of things, you might find it hard to advance."

Somber, Han Qi looked to the stage.

Marshal Persona's smoky voice was extremely charming to listen to.

He was singing.

"Years after we're no longer together,

"I still can't forget your warmth.

"You said you weren't good-looking enough for me.

"Well then,

"I'll let you go."

He finished singing.

Many audience members were intoxicated by his performance.

"He's such a strong singer!"

"He's absolutely an impressive singer!"

"What a display!"

"Great!"

The judges were also clapping as they found it to be quite a good performance.

Zhang Xia said, "Have any of you recognized him?"

"His voice sounds familiar." Chen Guang was thinking hard.

Dong Shanshan announced, "Next, let's welcome—The Clown!"

Yao Jiancai was taken aback. "The Clown is going up against Marshal Persona?"

Amy said, "It won't be easy for The Clown today since he's facing two great opponents! If he goes through to the battle round, Flowing Time will be there waiting for him. The immediate problem is that he might not even be able to win in the first round."

Zhang Xia made a noise in agreement, then analyzed, "Since it's already the fourth episode, unless he can come up with something extremely surprising, everyone knows how well he can sing. Although the audience still likes him, there's nothing fresh to expect from him. They would also have higher expectations for his performances. Him and Petal Shower progressing to this point in the competition has actually made it more difficult for them to move on. Let's see what he'll sing today, since that's gonna be the crux of the matter."

Chen Guang said, "Getting first place in Weibo's Ugliest Celebrities Rankings has surely affected him, in addition. At least, I think that some of the audience might change their view on him."

Amy turned to him. "That's just a poll for fun, isn't it? No way it'll be that bad, right?"

Chen Guang said calmly, "Because you're pretty, you don't understand how average-looking people like us find it hard to survive the entertainment industry. It's incredibly difficult."

Amy replied, "Aren't you doing rather well now?"

Chen Guang laughed bitterly, "But you didn't see how much we went through to get to where we are."

Yao Jiancai was deeply moved. "In this industry, even if we work five to ten times harder than some people, we might not be afforded the same opportunities."

Zhang Xia sighed. "I can understand."

Amy, Wang Zhuishu, and Chen Yidong fell silent.

The Clown slowly walked out and onto the stage.

Han Qi was cheering in her head, Go, Teacher Clown! Go!

Petal Shower went to the waiting area.

Sunset Glow also went.

The two of them did not expect each other to be thinking the same thing.

Sunset Glow asked, "What are you doing here?"

Petal Shower answered, "Any song that The Clown sings should be listened to live."

Sunset Glow laughed. "Agreed."

Petal Shower offhandedly asked, "Is The Clown really not good-looking?"

Sunset Glow said, "Yup. When I asked him this morning, he said that it was so."

"Who do you have your money on?"

"The Clown. He always manages to surprise us."

The audience's response was very different from the two contestants'!

Some were cheering!

Some were booing!

"It's finally The Clown's turn!"

"I'm looking forward to it!"

"What are you looking forward to? The image of my prince has been shattered!"

"Yeah, I had imagined The Clown to be very handsome!"

"You haven't even seen him yet, so how would you know he's not?"

"Someone online analyzed it and pretty much determined that he's indeed just average. I prefer a more handsome male singer!"

"Me too."

"I actually quite liked The Clown, but I can't bring myself to like him now! I'm all about the looks! Sob!"

"Marshal Persona is a handsome man for sure!"

"That's right! I've already decided to give my vote to Marshal!"

"I still can't decide. Is The Clown really that ugly?"

The girls especially could not accept the fact that The Clown was not a handsome guy. All of them were caught in a dilemma.

The lights dimmed.

But The Clown did not start singing.

This was a habit of his that everyone knew about, so the crowd fell silent.

Flowing Time was watching him from the wings. This was his first time listening to The Clown sing live.

The judges and audience were also looking at The Clown.

Zhang Ye stood onstage and took in everyone's attention. For a moment, he did not know how to sing. A complex swirl of emotions seemed to roil within him! His journey so far had been very difficult. Others could see some parts but not all. Zhang Ye had grit his teeth and walked step by step to get here. As he was just average-looking, he had nearly tripped right at the start without getting into the entertainment industry. Due to his mediocre looks, he had experienced countless criticism and doubt, as well unfair treatment! There were even people who would judge his personality and character based solely on his appearance! He had seen this on more than one occasion. Some Korean celebrities

got praised as kind and good people by their fans, who would go crazy all because the celebrities said hello, even though the fans didn't know whether their idols had gotten plastic surgery. Meanwhile, Zhang Ye, who had gotten into a fight over a bullied fan, and scolded others as he sought justice for the people, had done a lot for others. He had done so much, truly, yet no matter what he did, he would always incur the wrath of others!

Why?

Why was it like this?

Zhang Ye raised his microphone and looked down as he rested it near his [mouth](#).

The soft and gentle strings of a guitar thrummed.

"In the nightly wilderness of my dreams, I stand a proud giant.

"But every morning, before the bathroom mirror, I realize I'm living on the razor's edge."

When everyone read the title of the song, they were stunned!

Chen Guang was stunned!

Amy looked shocked!

The audience also looked startled!

This...

This song...

Zhang Ye closed his eyes and sang.

"In a jungle of reinforced concrete, in a life of being ordered around, "I think about the gulf between dreams and reality."

Please believe me!

Everyone, please believe me!

I am not a bad person!

I, Zhang Ye...really am not a bad person!

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and looked at the audience. He looked at all of them as he thumped his chest. Then, he used his shocking voice to sing loudly to everyone.

"I'm ugly,

"but I am so tender.

"Cold on the outside,

"passionate inside.

"That's who I am!"

Listening to this, Chen Guang rose to his feet!

"I'm ugly,

"but I have music and beer.

"A little lowly,

"a little fearful,

"but I'll never cower!"

Amy was screaming, "Oh my goodness!"

Spinach was dumbfounded in the wings. "What the fuck!"

Sunset Glow looked at Petal Shower in astonishment. "This..."

Even Flowing Time was stunned!

The audience was also stunned, to the point they even forgot to cheer and clap. How could this be! How could he still have such a song?!

Today, Zhang Ye was particularly sincere and couldn't control the emotions in his voice. Some of his pitch changes were all over the place as he didn't even try to control his voice! That was because this was a song he had wanted to sing for a while now, because this song contained all the things he had always wanted to say!

Yes.

I am not handsome!

In this entertainment industry filled with all kinds of handsome men and beautiful women, I'm not at all considered good-looking. I might be a TV host, but there are times when I really do not know how to express myself. I do not know how I should tell you what I'm feeling inside. I, Zhang Ye, have never harmed anyone nor ignored my conscience. I'm willing to give my all for you guys. I can go through all kinds of hardship for my country and fellow people, but I just don't know how I should tell you!

I can dig my heart out for all of you to see!

Would you like to see it?

I truly can dig my heart out for you to see!

It's red, really, and scalding!

Do you guys get it?

Do you...understand?

"Every morning,

"at the edge of the city,

"I wear a lonely mask.

"But in the nightly

"wilderness of music,

"I turn into a heartfelt, roaring giant.

"On a stage that stretches forever,

"on the other side of not being understood, "I come alive with ego and dignity."

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye grabbed the shirt over his chest, held onto it for dear life. He grabbed it with so much strength that it was like he was trying to dig his heart out.

"I'm ugly,

"but I am so tender.

"Dull in the day!

"Eternal at night!

"That's who I am!

"I'm ugly,

"but I have music and beer!

"Sometimes soaring!

"Sometimes humble!

"But always good at waiting!"

Yao Jiancai had at some point clenched his fists!

Chen Guang's eyes had reddened without him knowing. All the things he wanted to say had been said for him by The Clown. This song had given voice to his innermost feelings so much that wanted to rush up on stage with a microphone and sing along!

The audience was getting pumped up!

On the big screen, the cameras captured several male audience members crying as well!

This was not done for the effect of the show, and they definitely weren't people recruited by the program team. They were crying from the live atmosphere in the studio and The Clown's heartbreaking voice. It made those who were in the same boat lose control of their emotions!

Yes! They were ugly and lowly!

But they were really tender and would never cower!

The girl who had said that she was someone who judged others based on their appearance was now wiping away her tears. "I only like handsome guys. I don't like celebrities who aren't good-looking, have never, and definitely won't ever! But can anyone tell me what's going on with me right now? Why do I like The Clown

so much!"

Suddenly, the music stopped.

The entire studio fell so silent you could hear a pin drop!

Zhang Ye raised his microphone and, singing in a cappella, his voice reverberated through the studio.

"I'm ugly,

"but I am so tender.

"A little lowly,

"a little fearful,

"but I'll never cower."

Flowing Time was silent.

He had been silent ever since The Clown sang his first line. He asked himself if he could have won if he had used that Mandarin song versus The Clown.

The answer was no!

He realized that he would probably not have won!

No one could beat The Clown and his song!

Chapter 1041: Winning!

The performance ended.

Suddenly, a few female audience members stood up.

"I love you, The Clown!"

"I'll love you no matter how ugly you are!"

Applause rang out through the studio!

Screams came from all places!

"This is so good!"

"This song is so amazing!"

"What a good song this is!"

"I'm ugly, but I am so tender?"

"I want to learn this song! I must learn it!"

"The Clown surprises us every time!"

"Yeah, I thought that The Clown wouldn't do well this week. When I read a lot of the comments by industry insiders and other people, they were all talking about how he had done too well. Now that we were into the fourth episode, the audience would no longer feel that he was fresh. That would only make it harder and harder for him to proceed and possibly even put him on the decline. But after listening to him sing today, I find that all those comments are bullshit! How could The Clown not be good enough? Is this what you call not good enough? Is this what you'd fucking call a decline?"

"Each of his songs gets better!"

"What I most admire about The Clown is that he tells a story through each of his songs. And, the stories are always about himself and fit the situations to a T!"

"How surprising!"

"Where did all those songs come from?"

"I don't know. Damn, who on earth wrote them for him?"

"Even a master lyricist and composer like Wang Zhuishu, who is on the judging panel, could not possibly come up with so many earth-shattering songs in such a short span of time, could he? Could it be that Wang Zhuishu, along with Zhang Ye and a dozen of those famous songwriters, fucking wrote all those songs for him? And they're even tailor-made for him and the situations that he's in? That's impossible! If it were that way, why hasn't anyone recognized him yet?"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

The shouting came wave after wave!

This song that had come from Zhang Ye's previous world was the famous classic by Zhao Chuan, "[I'm Ugly But Tender](#)," and it had shocked everyone in the studio. A classic would always be a classic. This song that had stood the test of time in Zhang Ye's previous world was also capable of shocking people here now that it had been brought to this world!

The host came back onstage.

Dong Shanshan smiled. "Let's welcome Marshal Persona back to the stage."

Marshal Persona came back up to the stage and gave The Clown a nod.

The Clown nodded back to greet him.

Dong Shanshan looked over to the guessing panel. "Judges, what do you think?"

Chen Guang opined, "My eyes turned red just now. After four episodes of King of Masked Singers, this is the first time I've felt

my eyes turn red in the studio. I don't have much to say. This song affected me deeply. Marshal Persona sang well today. In fact, he sang especially well. However, The Clown's performance can only be described with two words: absolutely perfect!"

Amy said, "Earlier, Teacher Chen and Teacher Yao told us about how people who don't exactly have outstanding looks have it almost impossible in the entertainment industry. Although I personally feel that Teacher Chen and Teacher Yao are both quite handsome, after I finished listening to your song, I experienced a lot of emotion. I won't say anything more as there isn't much else to say." She spread her hands and said, "I just like The Clown very much, so much that I can't use words to describe my like!"

Zhang Xia talked from a technical point of view, "Marshal Persona is a very good singer and is very comprehensive technically. I can tell from his singing that he has a very strong foundation and should be a professional singer. His status in the music industry should also be quite high."

Marshal Persona smiled.

Zhang Xia said, "As for The Clown, I really do not know who he is. There's no one I can match him to. Listening to his song today, it felt a little different from his previous two songs. There are even some parts where even the average person would think they could hear a mistake. Like the trembling in his voice? The crack in his voice? But I don't think that's what it is!"

Wang Zhuishu said, "Correct."

Zhang Xia continued, "The way The Clown sang today was by using his emotions to drive the music. He used his raw emotions to sing and transmitted his innermost feelings to everyone through the music. I've already said this once before, but this is such a high standard and not something that every singer can hope to have. This song's difficulty lies not in its high notes or other aspects, but in its expression of emotion. Handling this emotional nuance is

truly difficult and I personally believe that I couldn't sing this song either. There can only be two outcomes when singing this song. Either it gets sung really badly or it gets sung really well, of which The Clown belongs to the latter category! Even if the pickiest person faced The Clown's song today, they wouldn't be able to nitpick a thing! It's that good, just that good!"

The Clown nodded to express his thanks. He wanted to say "you're flattering me," but suddenly remembered that he might say it with an accent since this was a commonly used phrase in the Beijing region. So he did not dare to say it since he was afraid that he would get recognized immediately.

Yao Jiancai said, "If I were to vote, I would also vote for The Clown. It's just that simple!"

The judges were done commenting.

Dong Shanshan followed up with, "Alright, we'll proceed to the voting now."

The voting began!

The audience picked up their voting devices!

Marshal Persona looked at the audience, as did the judges. Actually, no matter what their comments were, it was all useless since the voting depended entirely on the audience. They had to be convinced of a contestant's performance. Just like in the previous round where Flowing Time and Spinach were at a pretty similar level of singing with an unclear difference, the audience did not see it that way and voted for Flowing Time in a one-sided affair. The right to vote and decision-making laid in the hands of the audience!

When the voting began, the conclusion became obvious!

When a lot of the people saw the real-time tallies on the big screen, they exclaimed!

The Clown: 10 votes.

Marshal Persona: 1 vote.

And then.

The Clown: 45 votes.

Marshal Persona: 9 votes.

The difference was too large!

There was basically no suspense as to how it'd end!

In the end, when the final tallies were counted!

The Clown's total votes: 377 votes!

Marshal Persona: 123 votes!

Dong Shanshan announced, "The winner of this match: The Clown!"

The Clown bowed in thanks.

Marshal Persona applauded the winner.

The moment he got off the stage, The Clown was surrounded by people!

Xiao Lu was flabbergasted. "Teacher, you were so awesome!"

Dafei said sincerely, "You sang great up there!"

Meanwhile, Flowing Time had gone backstage at some point in time and was nowhere to be found.

Han Qi was beyond excited. "Teacher Clown! Why didn't you use this song for the next round? With it, you definitely wouldn't have lost to Flowing Time, even against a hundred-plus Hokkien speaking audience members!" She was both happy for The Clown and bemoaning the disadvantage he had!

This song was incredible!

But what about the next round?

Flowing Time had challenged him!

Even if Teacher Clown had done well in this round, when he faced Hokkien singer Flowing Time in the next round, he would still not have a good chance of winning. In Han Qi's opinion, this huge killer move should have been used as a last resort. But Teacher Clown had brought it out in the first round!

However, Zhang Ye simply smiled, not saying a word.

The next round?

He had a song up his sleeve for the next round!

Chapter 1042: Flowing Time vs. The Clown!

On Weibo.

Someone broke the news.

"The Clown won!"

"Seriously?"

"Yes, seriously! I'm at the fucking recording studio right now! The program team took everyone's cell phones, but this bro has two of them! I'm in the bathroom secretly connecting to the Internet!"

"By how many votes?"

"300 votes to 100. The gap was massive!"

"What! The Clown has been singing amazingly for four episodes now! How does he continue to be so awesome?"

"This, this isn't scientific!"

"He wasn't just awesome! The Clown was godly today. I won't spoil for you guys, so watch it on TV tomorrow and find out for yourselves! Oh yes, Flowing Time also won his first round match. He won by a huge margin and steamrolled Spinach! And there was an unexpected incident that happened today. Your sister! When I saw the people attending the recording, almost all of them spoke Hokkien. I was dumbfounded. After I asked around, I found out that they were the employees of the show's sponsors from Xiamen and Chaoshan. There are close to two hundred of them! I'll reveal a little more. Flowing Time's identity is as good as confirmed. He's the flag bearer of Hokkien songs—Teacher Zhao Qiquan! Even though he sang a Mandarin song during the first round, we could still hear his accent!"

"Almost all of the audience are Hokkien speakers?"

"Damn, then what's there left to compete on!"

"What are these circumstances?!"

"Flowing Time will definitely win today!"

"What's wrong with Beijing TV?"

"Who knows! What a terrible mishandling of things!"

These Weibo messages were deleted soon after they were posted.

No one really knew if the messages were deleted by the person themselves or if Beijing Television found the person and made them delete them.

...

At the television station.

In the waiting room.

Zhang Ye was watching the competition through the TV.

Flowing Time was the first person to proceed to the battle round while The Clown was the second to get through. The fight for the last spot in the battle round was about to begin.

Petal Shower vs. Sunset Glow.

In the previous episodes, Petal Shower had directly or indirectly come up against Sunset Glow. Based on prior experience, Petal Shower's chance of winning was up to 90% and she held a big advantage. Petal Shower performed very well onstage today as she once again went back to the type of falsetto that she had used in the first and second episodes. As she sang entirely in falsetto, her voice sounded ethereal. Although she did not sing to her third episode's godly level, it was still remarkable and she did quite well. Essentially, she had performed the song to her usual level.

That was how the judges saw it.

That was what the audience thought as well.

Zhang Ye also felt that Petal Shower would win.

But when Sunset Glow went onstage and raised her microphone,

a lot of people were stunned!

It was still a slow song like before.

It was a love song.

But the Sunset Glow today was just too amazing. Be it her singing skill, voice, or song selection, it gave everyone a completely different view of her. It was a heaven-defying performance and she placed herself in a fantastic position!

This was what it was like being a singer. Talent was only one factor; the ability to perform onstage was another. For example, Zhang Ye was the type of performer who always did things spontaneously. Normally, his singing would probably be average. But when he got into the right mindset, he was able to perform exceedingly well. Today, Sunset Glow was undoubtedly in this frame of mind as well. She had sung a very classic oldie called "How Often Does the Sun Set in the West" to a very godly state. She had been tepid in her performances so far and had been keeping relatively quiet for the past three episodes. But in the fourth episode's recording, Sunset Glow had finally broken out!

Even Zhang Ye was utterly convinced after listening!

In the wings, Petal Shower was applauding Sunset Glow!

When the results came out!

Petal Shower: 218 votes!

Sunset Glow: 281 votes!

Sunset Glow won her match against Petal Shower to become the third person to get through to the battle round!

This was something no one had expected. But when they listened to this matchup's performances, it was still within reason. Someone had analyzed that even if The Clown were to go against Sunset Glow in the first round, it would have been very difficult to decide a victor between the two songs and who would win or lose.

In this competition, it was not only The Clown and Petal Shower who knew how to sing. Those who could appear on this stage were all people who could suddenly burst onto the scene someday. In fact, everyone was more or less at the same level!

And the key reason that many people had analyzed the potential matchups before today's competition was that there was too much attention on Petal Shower. Ever since the first episode, discussions about her had never stopped. After three episodes, the audience had become all too familiar with her singing, style, and choices of song. This led to their anticipation lowering. Instead, it was Sunset Glow who had never excelled so far to suddenly perform so well. This surprised the audience greatly!

Thinking of this, a lot of people were feeling even less optimistic about The Clown's upcoming performance. Like Petal Shower, there was too much attention given to The Clown in the previous episodes. He was in the same situation as Petal Shower was earlier. Moreover, today Flowing Time also held the "home field" advantage in the studio!

The first round ended.

There was a 15 minute intermission between rounds.

By rights, the next round should have been the elimination round in which two contestants would be knocked out. But soon, the singers received a notification.

Han Qi knocked on the door and came in. "Teacher."

Zhang Ye looked at her. "What's the matter?"

"Please get ready." Han Qi said, "It's gonna your turn soon."

Zhang Ye asked, "Now?"

Han Qi nodded and said, "Teacher Petal Shower has a bit of a stomach ache, so the program team decided to record the battle round first. That's why it's gonna your turn soon."

Zhang Ye nodded. "Alright."

He was ready at any time.

Han Qi cheered, "You can do it!" In reality, she was feeling quite aggrieved and was not confident at all. If it were normal circumstances, she would feel that The Clown wouldn't lose today. But the problem was that the circumstances were not normal. At least a small half of the audience present today spoke Hokkien. Under such conditions, how could The Clown compete against Flowing Time? Even if he sang really well, it would still be a Mandarin song and the audience might not like it!

...

In the studio.

The judges were also notified of the schedule change.

Dong Shanshan went up onstage and told the audience, "There has been a last-minute change of plans. We'll be moving up the recording of the battle round."

With that announcement, the atmosphere in the studio immediately changed!

"They're going straight into this week's battle for the Masked King?"

"Flowing Time is returning to the stage soon?"

"This is great!"

"I've been waiting for some time!"

"Flowing Time is going to face off against The Clown?"

"I'm looking forward to it!"

"What's there to look forward to?"

"What's the matter?"

"Just look over there and you'll know. There's no suspense to the results of this battle round!"

Many of the audience members looked over.

They saw two groups of many people in the audience wearing the same outfit and shouting in Hokkien. Some of them were cheering while others were shouting Flowing Time's name. When they heard that Flowing Time and The Clown were going to come back onstage next, the atmosphere at their spot in the audience immediately grew frenzied. Many of those who came to attend the recording today were waiting for just this moment. The challenge that Flowing Time had issued to The Clown had caused quite a commotion throughout the country and everyone was waiting to see how it would turn out!

The cameras started rolling.

The battle for the Masked King has begun!

The host's voice resounded, "Let us welcome—Flowing Time."

A round of applause rang out!

"Flowing Time!"

"Go for it!"

"Teacher Zhao, you can do it!"

"Can you sing a Hokkien song please?"

"Don't sing Mandarin songs anymore!"

"Flowing Time, I love you!"

Flowing Time came out onto the stage with a smile. When he saw the audience's expressions and heard their screaming, he got into a great mood and became very confident as well, although this was no longer a matter of whether he was confident or not. On today's stage, it almost felt like he had home field advantage. Flowing Time didn't think that he would lose at all, nor was there any reason to think so. It was just impossible for him to lose since he was the only Hokkien singer here today. He already had an overwhelming advantage, so all he had to do now was sing well

and the title of Masked King would safely go to him!

Just a while ago, The Clown's performance had indeed left him stunned.

Later, Sunset Glow's performance had greatly surprised him.

If he had sung a Mandarin song, Flowing Time felt that he definitely wouldn't have beat the two of them. The two of them were in excellent shape today, but it would totally be a different story if he sang a Hokkien song! Even without counting those numerous audience members in the studio who could speak Hokkien, Flowing Time still had his own reasons to be confident. Although the Mandarin song he sang in the first round was very good, that was not his true talent. As a Hokkien singer, his forte was in singing Hokkien songs. His talent was totally different when singing in these two languages. It was like he was two completely different people!

Chapter 1043: 'Strive Hard to Succeed'! (First Half)

Onstage.

The music started playing.

Flowing Time's stage presence was already entirely different from his first round's performance. The moment the music started, he skipped along to the rhythm as he danced playfully for a bit. Compared to his previous song, he was able to let himself go. This was who he really was!

"Ignore me.

"Squinty eyes.

"Hey, ho, hey."

Flowing Time sang loudly!

Authentic Hokkien spouted out with every line!

When the audience heard, they immediately got pumped up. A lot of them were waving fluorescent glow sticks in their hands along to the beat.

At the judging panel.

Amy looked next to her. "Is it Teacher Zhao Qiquan?"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "He has to be!"

Wang Zhuishu nodded. "I can confirm that he's definitely Old Zhao. I've known him for many years, but I haven't had much contact with him for the past two years. I never expected that industry veteran Old Zhao would come and join King of Masked Singers. This will be interesting. It's been a long time since I've heard him sing, but he's as passionate as ever!"

Chen Guang also nodded firmly. "There's such a huge difference when Flowing Time sings a Hokkien song instead of a Mandarin

song!"

Chen Yidong praised, "It's indeed wonderful!"

Yao Jiancai was delighted from listening to the performance. "Is this what the top Hokkien singer is all about?"

How legendary!

How cool!

This song was called "Squinty Eyes." Not many people had heard of it before, because Hokkien songs were less mainstream in this world and there were only a few well-known ones. Flowing Time probably considered how if he sang those well-known Hokkien songs that he had sung so many times whenever he got featured on television shows and in his concerts, everyone would probably be sick of them. It would no longer bring any excitement to the audience, so perhaps it was due to these considerations that he chose this song.

The audience members who understood Hokkien were bought right into this performance!

These people loved watching King of Masked Singers. Among them, there were some who liked The Clown, and some who were fans of Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, and the others. But now that there was suddenly someone singing Hokkien songs on the show, it brought a warm and familiar feeling to them, and they would definitely give their full support to him. Right now, be it The Clown or Petal Shower, they were both forgotten by these people!

This was human nature and easily understandable. For example, when you meet your fellow people in your hometown, you would not feel anything different and might even feel annoyed sometimes. But if you went to a different city and suddenly heard someone speaking your hometown's language on the buses or in the streets, you would surely be overcome by a surge of affection!

There was a man among them who was dressed differently from

the employees. He obviously had the air of a boss and was likely one of the advertisers' upper management or even their CEO. He was probably a fan of Zhao Qiquan as he was currently standing and clapping with all his might!

The atmosphere was great!

Some of the audience members who did not understand Hokkien also got energized from listening. Although there was a language barrier, they could still look at the translated lyrics shown on the second teleprompter display behind the contestant. This teleprompter display was not meant for the contestants but the audience to look at. Some of the Hokkien words could not be translated word for word, and there were even some verses that were very difficult to translate into Mandarin, so only a transliteration was possible.

"Squinty eyes.

"Smiling guise.

"Ohh...ohh!"

When he was coming to the end of the song, Flowing Time even started dancing.

This "Squinty Eyes" was sung almost to perfection by him. From the song, his singing skills, to the musical arrangement, everything was flawless!

Although there were some people from Xiamen and Chaoshan who felt that this song's lyrics were just average, and that Flowing Time should have sung one of his more well-known songs, they were still quite satisfied that they could listen to a Hokkien song at the live recording of King of Masked Singers.

The song ended!

Everyone stood up and applauded!

"Good!"

"It was really quite good!"

"Experience still counts for a good showing!"

"I'm beginning to like Hokkien songs!"

"Me too! It was pretty good!"

Even some of the audience members who did not understand Hokkien also came to be interested in Hokkien songs. This was because either only Cantonese or Mandarin songs had been performed on this stage; everyone had heard them too often. So today, the audience was quite curious when someone suddenly sang a Hokkien song. They enjoyed it greatly!

Flowing Time bowed and went offstage with a smile.

When the audience saw this, they gave their most enthusiastic applause to him once more!

Flowing Time did not return to the waiting room. After he left the stage, he waited in the wings as he still needed to go back onstage after The Clown and Sunset Glow were done performing. Flowing Time kept his eyes peeled in the direction of the waiting area as he was quite curious about what song The Clown would sing this time to compete against him for this episode's Masked King!

At the judging panel.

Zhang Xia asked, "What do you guys think The Clown's and Sunset Glow's chances are?"

Wang Zhuishu laughed dryly and said, "They probably don't stand a chance."

When Chen Yidong turned around and saw those Hokkien audience members whose enthusiasm had not subsided yet, he also laughed. "I think so too. How are they going to compete with him this way?"

He had practically brought all of his extended family along!

A third of the people in the studio spoke Hokkien!

Chen Guang analyzed, "Actually, Sunset Glow still has some hope. Her form is very good today and she has maintained a low profile in each of the last three episodes, so the focus on her is lower than The Clown and Petal Shower's. The audience also seems to be looking forward to her performance, but as for The Clown...this round is much too difficult for him."

Amy added, "Unless he can come up with some weird surprises again!"

In the waiting area.

Zhang Ye listened as he watched without saying a word.

Han Qi was anxiously stamping around. Judging from the audience's reaction, Teacher Clown was definitely done for. If this were a normal recording like any other day, Han Qi would have been fine with things as long as The Clown was not eliminated. It was not like he had to be the Masked King every episode—that would be quite impossible—since he had already won it twice. Today was different. Flowing Time had issued the challenge and news of it had spread all over the Internet. If Teacher Clown lost today, who knew what Flowing Time would say? He was here to seek justice for Li Yu after all!

Han Qi did not like Flowing Time as she felt he had been hyping up the incident for his own benefit. Although he had some status in the industry, he was still just a minority language singer. His popularity was considered high, and he hadn't appeared on television for a long time. Before this episode's recording, Flowing Time had challenged The Clown directly. He even used the excuse of seeking justice for Li Yu to attract news and discussion interest onto himself. At the studio, he provoked The Clown through speech on more than one occasion. Now that there were many audience members who could speak Hokkien attending the recording, Han Qi couldn't help but suspect that this was all

planned by Flowing Time!

How despicable!

He was just using The Clown to increase his own popularity. Did Teacher Clown offend you or something?

Li Yu was one!

Zhao Qiquan was another!

There were really all kinds of people in the entertainment industry!

Han Qi angered the more she thought about it.

But The Clown did not have much of a reaction. No one knew what he was thinking about.

Dong Shanshan's voice sounded, "Next, let's welcome—The Clown!"

Dafei came over and said, "Break a leg, Teacher."

Xiao Lu apologized, "I'm sorry, Teacher Clown."

The program team felt quite apologetic as they believed it was their negligence that led to this match between The Clown and Flowing Time starting off in an extreme state of unfairness!

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "It's alright."

He slowly walked out onstage.

Petal Shower had recovered a little and came over as soon as she could.

Sunset Glow and Spinach were also standing in the wings.

Everyone knew that it would be very difficult for The Clown to defeat Flowing Time!

Flowing Time was already breaking out into a smile underneath his mask. He was very relaxed as he gazed with great interest at The Clown, onstage. He knew that he already had this round in the

bag.

The audience was also discussing, as well as pointing at The Clown.

"It's The Clown turn now!"

"It's time to decide who the victor is between the two of them?"

"Actually, the result is obvious!"

"The Clown won't win."

The lights turned off.

The studio grew quiet.

Chen Guang and Amy sat up straight. Even though they knew that The Clown did not really have a chance of winning, they still couldn't help but look forward to his second song of the day!

Everyone focused their attention on The Clown!

Everyone was paying attention to every move he made!

Zhang Ye looked at the judges, then the audience. From the looks in their eyes, he could see many things.

I can't beat him? These were the words Zhang Ye had heard most today. Someone mentioned it right in front of him, and he also overheard others who said it in their private conversations. He also knew that Flowing Time had home field advantage today as many of audience members could speak Hokkien. But Zhang Ye never once thought he would lose. He could afford not to fight for the crown of the Masked King today. But you, Zhao Qiquan, if you want to use me as a stepping stone to climb higher? You wish to use me to elevate yourself? Then of course I'm not going to let you have your way! You want to step on me by resorting to those petty tricks? You think you can beat me by getting some audience members who speak Hokkien?

You have really underestimated me, Zhang Ye!

I'll show you what you get for underestimating me!

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye's entire aura changed!

Zhang Xia was taken aback.

Petal Shower looked bewildered.

Flowing Time frowned.

The music started playing!

This melody was still a song no one had ever heard of before. When they saw the title of the song, it was also a song that they hadn't come across before. "[Strive Hard to Succeed](#)"? It was obviously an original!

Flowing Time smiled when he saw the title!

Strive hard to succeed?

What are you striving hard for?

How are you going to strive hard?

This is not something you can succeed at just by trying hard! You sure are naïve! Alright then, I'd like to see how you are going to strive hard and how you are going to succeed!

A Mandarin song?

Or a Cantonese song?

Hur hur, sing whatever you want!

The Clown raised his microphone lightly.

Then, when The Clown sang the first verse of the song, Flowing Time received a bolt!

The Clown sang.

"Don't despair when you're in the mourn.

"Don't be afraid when you're forlorn.

"Passing time without any hope,

"Every day going down to tope.

"A person without a soul is like a scarecrow."

Chapter 1044: 'Strive Hard to Succeed' (Second Half)

Holy shit!

Holy shit!

Holy shit!

When The Clown opened his mouth to sing, everyone was dumbfounded!

Flowing Time was so shocked he nearly fell down!

Amy stood up in shock!

Wang Zhuishu was stunned!

Hu Fei and Xiao Lu's jaws dropped!

In the wings, Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, and Spinach nearly lost their footing!

The studio audience went slack-jawed!

It was Hokkien!

It was a Hokkien song!

What was going on?

What the fuck was happening?

How could The Clown possibly know how to sing a Hokkien song? This was impossible! I-It was just impossible! When did he learn Hokkien? Who, who could've written all those songs for him?!

The Clown did not even look at how everyone reacted or the expressions on their faces. He just sang loudly and fluently in Hokkien.

"Life is like the waves on the sea.

"Sometimes up, sometimes down.

"Good luck or bad,

"We still must continue to work.

"Thirty percent Heaven's will!

"Seventy percent hard work!

["Strive hard to succeed!"](#)

Oh my god!

Amazing!

It was so goddamn amazing!

The audience members who could understand Hokkien felt like they had seen a ghost. It was quite expected that Flowing Time would sing a Hokkien song because Flowing Time was Zhao Qiquan. He was a professional Hokkien singer and had been singing Hokkien songs for over a decade. But who was this Clown person? Who the fuck was this guy? How could there be someone else who could sing Hokkien songs in such a way? And be it his voice, singing, or vocal technique, all of them was even slightly better than the best Hokkien singer, Zhao Qiquan? This...this...

And where did this song pop out from?

Even though it was their first time hearing it, why was the melody so good? And the lyrics were good as well?

The Clown continued singing.

"Don't despair when you're in the mourn.

"Don't be afraid when you're forlorn.

"Passing time without any hope,

"Every day going down to tope.

"A person without a soul is like a scarecrow."

One!

Ten!

A hundred!

Many of the audience members started standing up!

Especially those who understood Hokkien—they had the greatest reaction out of everyone. Many of them were waving the fluorescent glow sticks in their hands madly as they watched, dumbfounded!

This song was incredible!

It was so good!

"Life is like the waves on the sea.

"Sometimes up, sometimes down.

"Good luck or bad,

"We still must continue to work."

Flowing Time's face turned green from anger!

When the nearby Spinach saw the look on Flowing Time's face, she burst out laughing.

When Sunset Glow noticed Spinach laughing, she let out a giggle as well. Looking at The Clown who was onstage and Flowing Time who stood in the wings watching, she had to give props to The Clown!

Chen Guang was impressed!

Zhang Xia was impressed!

Yao Jiancai was impressed!

The program team staff and everyone present were all impressed!

They didn't know what words they could use to describe The Clown with anymore!

The Clown pointed to the ceiling and sang.

"Thirty percent Heaven's will!"

Dong dong!

"Seventy percent hard work!"

Dong dong!

"Strive hard to succeed!"

Along with the beat, the audience got fired up!

Amy yelled, "Why does he even know Hokkien?!"

Wang Zhuishu said, "Who knows!"

Chen Guang said in amusement, "This person has truly brought us surprise after surprise, over and over again. By the way, who was the one that said The Clown would definitely lose this round?"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "You were."

Chen Guang coughed. "Did I? I didn't say that."

Yao Jiancai laughed heartily. "Old Chen's trying to go back on his words. Stop denying it!"

Chen Yidong said in a speechless manner, "Who would have thought that he could sing in Hokkien and have such an original song lineup as well! Aiyo, I'm really impressed. Who in the world is he?"

As they listened to the song and chatted among themselves, they could not help but look to Flowing Time. Just by the shocked expression seen in Flowing Time's eyes behind his mask, they knew he could not have expected that The Clown would actually sing a Hokkien song even in a hundred lifetimes!

It truly was a matter of striving hard to succeed!

Everyone had underestimated The Clown!

In the previous episode, they could feel the pain on Li Yu's face!

In this episode, they could feel the pain on Flowing Time's face!

Han Qi was extremely excited as she waved her hands with all her

might and screamed from the wings. Everyone thought that The Clown would surely lose, but who could have guessed that he would bring out this song!

"Life is like the waves on the sea.

"Sometimes up, sometimes down.

"Good luck or bad,

"We still must continue to work.

"Thirty percent Heaven's will!

"Seventy percent hard work!

"Strive hard to succeed!"

Flowing Time was already cursing in his head. He still did not wish to believe that The Clown was really singing a Hokkien song. It was unlike the Cantonese songs that many people knew how to sing. As there were more good Cantonese songs around, those who liked listening to Cantonese songs would more or less know how to sing a few lines as well as pronounce the lyrics quite accurately. Flowing Time had sung in Hokkien, which was considered as a minority language. Moreover, there weren't many Hokkien songs that were especially popular in this world!

So how the fuck did you manage to know how to sing this one?

You can even goddamn sing something like this?

Fucking hell, aren't you too multi-talented?!

You must be doing this on purpose!

On the stage.

The Clown finished performing.

The audience erupted into cheers and applause!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

The audience members who understood Hokkien were shouting the loudest!

When Flowing Time saw this, his heart skipped a beat. He knew that he might actually lose today. The home field advantage he was relying on had turned into The Clown's advantage! He had intended to step on The Clown to win the competition, but who could have known that The Clown would slap him soundly instead! Flowing Time really regretted coming onto this stage. He didn't gain much popularity and, from the looks of it, might even lose the initial popularity and status he had had!

Although there were winners and losers on this stage, with even Petal Shower losing before, it was really no big deal. However, the current situation Flowing Time was in was different. He provoked The Clown by challenging The Clown to verse him. In the end, as a flag bearer of the Hokkien music scene, he got smacked in the face by a foreigner who sang in Hokkien? What sort of feeling was this? Just thinking about it made it unbearable for him to watch!

How could it just be painful for his face?

It was so painful that it felt like his balls were being crushed!

As Flowing Time thought about it, his face flushed red and green!

Zhang Ye quickly walked off the stage.

Petal Shower gave him a thumbs up!

Spinach raised both her hands and gave him two thumbs up!

Sunset Glow laughed dryly. "It was Flowing Time's misfortune to have bumped into you!"

Spinach nudged her chin in a certain direction. "Teacher Zhao is almost in tears! Teacher Clown, you were so ruthless. That was really ruthless, hahahahaha!"

Today's competition had been quite exciting!

Someone wanted to die while others wanted to laugh.

Everyone was even more baffled by The Clown now. The urge to go onstage and pull his mask off grew even greater as everyone wanted to find out exactly who The Clown was!

You can sing Mandarin songs?

You can sing Cantonese songs?

You can even sing a northeastern-accented song?

And now? You can even sing a fucking Hokkien song?!

Where did you learn all these from? Where did all these songs come from?

Chapter 1045: An extra round!

The Clown had exited the stage.

It was the next contestant's turn to go on.

However, there were still some people in the audience discussing him in astonishment.

"Zhao Qiquan didn't turn out to be such a big deal after all!"

"Just who is the true Hokkien singer between the two of them?"

"The Clown sang much better than Flowing Time!"

"Yeah. Without a comparison, no one would have known. But the moment they both sang a Hokkien song, I got shocked!"

"So it turns out that Zhao Qiquan, the so-called best Hokkien singer, is only so-so. It's not that his singing is good, but that there's too little competition in the Hokkien music scene. Not many people sing Hokkien songs, but once any of those elite singers sing in the language, any one of them would be better than him!"

"That's not really how it is. It was only because The Clown was so good that it made it seem like it."

"Right, the guy's incredible. How does he know how to sing everything!"

"He has already sung pop songs, rock songs, folk songs, a song without lyrics, songs with lyrics, a Cantonese song, a northeastern-accented song, Mandarin songs, and even a Hokkien song!"

"This is a singing show, but why does it feel like I'm watching a martial arts film instead? The Clown is really versatile and skilled in so many areas! Hahahaha! I'm dying of laughter!"

"That was really enjoyable!"

"This episode's gonna be wonderful!"

"This is what a professional singing competition should be. The Voice pales in comparison!"

"It's Sunset Glow's turn now!"

"Right, Sunset Glow is also a fearsome competitor today!"

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Now, let's hand the stage to Sunset Glow."

Sunset Glow went onstage.

The audience was very accommodating as they immediately quieted down.

Sunset Glow nodded to express her gratitude. Then she looked at the band and nodded at them, signaling that she was ready to start.

In truth, in this round of the competition, The Clown's and Sunset Glow's chances of winning were very slim. It was very difficult for the two of them to compete against Flowing Time as he probably had an 80% chance of winning. This was because Flowing Time was a Hokkien singer and a lot of Hokkien audience members had turned up for today's recording. But when The Clown sang "Strive Hard to Succeed," he ruthlessly reversed the situation and utterly broke up Flowing Time's chances of becoming the Masked King. Further, with those two Hokkien songs performed, Sunset Glow as the remaining singer performing a Mandarin song actually gained an advantage. This was because the audience's curiosity had been dulled, and the hundred-plus votes from the Hokkien speaking audience were allocated between The Clown and Flowing Time. With such subtle changes to the circumstances, Sunset Glow instead became the one with the highest chance of becoming the Masked King among the contestants!

"You asked me,

"Why I never cower.

"You asked me,

"Why I never panic."

After just two verses, all the judges revealed astonished expressions! Was Sunset Glow on steroids today? Her form was spectacular. It looked like she had already familiarized herself with this stage. She did not feel nervous anymore and was able to let herself go. Perhaps this was what you call a late bloomer? No wonder even Petal Shower was taken down by her during the first round!

Once the song finished, the studio thundered with applause!

A lot of people were moved by the gentle and soothing voice in Sunset Glow's singing. This song was originally a rock song and was a song that had shot a male rock band to fame. Now, Sunset Glow had arranged it and used a quiet and womanly voice to sing the song. Be it the audience or the judges, none of them had ever heard anyone sing the song like this. It was extremely original and everyone was very impressed with it!

The audience was faced with a dilemma!

"This is too difficult to choose!"

"Yeah, who should I vote for?"

"They are all super great!"

"Sunset Glow was so incredible! I didn't pay much attention to her before, but I could never have expected that she would be such an amazing singer!"

"Sunset Glow should probably win this!"

"Yes, she has really good chances of becoming the Masked King!"

"The interpretation of the song was very well done!"

"It looks like The Clown will perish together with Flowing Time today. The two of them fought such a battle and the victor has been decided, but Sunset Glow should benefit the most from their fight!"

"Let's see what the judges are going to say."

"I still haven't decided who to vote for."

Dong Shanshan went onstage.

The Clown and Flowing Time were also invited back to join her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Wow, I'm really enjoying today's competition." She gestured to her rear. "This is the first time that I've realized that live singing can really make one sweat." She looked at the judges and said, "I wonder what the judges think. Teacher Zhang Xia?"

Zhang Xia smiled. "In fact, I was sweating too just now."

A smile hung from Dong Shanshan's lips. "You did too?"

Zhang Xia nodded and said, "When I listened to Sunset Glow's singing, I enjoyed it to the point of sweating. But when I listened to The Clown's singing, I was...sweating with shock!"

Everyone laughed!

Indeed, a lot of people were shocked just now. No one could have expected him to sing a Hokkien song so fluently the moment he opened his mouth. At that time, even the Miracle Wheels band members, who were playing the live accompaniment for his performance, were shocked. This was because The Clown did not sing the lyrics during the rehearsal beforehand. Hence, all of them thought that it was going to be a Mandarin song!

Zhang Xia thought for a moment. "If I were to vote, I would vote for Sunset Glow today. She was fantastic!"

Sunset Glow bowed. "Thank you, Teacher!"

Chen Guang laughed and said, "The Clown is the singer I most admire today. I never thought that he would still have that sort of song. But if we are judging from pure singing skills and fine details, I would probably vote for Sunset Glow."

The Clown nodded.

Sunset Glow bowed again. "Thank you."

Yao Jiancai chuckled, "I would vote for The Clown. I can't give any professional comments here. I just feel that "Strive Hard to Succeed" was just that good!"

The judges expressed their opinions.

Four of them supported Sunset Glow while two of them supported The Clown.

Standing next to them, Flowing Time was left hanging. Only Wang Zhuishu, whom he knew from long ago, praised him a little and even that was just a symbolic gesture. The other judges did not even bring him up in their comments. Actually, this was probably the best outcome for Flowing Time. Whether the singing, lyrics, or melody, Flowing Time knew that he was far inferior to The Clown's Hokkien song. If the judges really used their professional point of view to analyze, Flowing Time would be even more disgraced. As the best Hokkien singer, he would have been even more embarrassed!

Then the voting began!

The tallies for each of them kept changing!

The audience's shouts and expressions kept changing as well!

"Ah, The Clown's votes went up!"

"Sunset Glow is in first place now!"

"Give your vote to Flowing Time!"

"Aiyo, vote!"

"Sunset Glow!"

"The Clown!"

The voting ended!

But Zhang Ye did not even turn around to look because he did not have the thought of competing for the title of Masked King in mind

today. Nobody could be the center of attention all the time. He had to occasionally give the chance to other people. Besides, he was already making preparations for the King of Masked Singers' grand finals by keeping a low profile. If he kept being the center of attention and the height of popularity and brought out all his killer moves this early on, how could he handle the grand finals of the competition?

As a result, he felt great. This fellow was here today to teach Flowing Time a lesson, and his objective had been met!

However, when the voting ended, he realized that the audience looked surprised. Dong Shanshan also delayed announcing the results!

What was going on?

What has happened?

Did Sunset Glow win?

The audience was stunned.

The program team was stunned.

The host was also stunned.

"Uh..."

"This..."

Zhang Ye couldn't help but turn around to have a look. He was also slightly taken aback by what he saw!

Flowing Time: 36 votes!

The Clown: 232 votes!

Sunset Glow: 232 votes!

They tied!

The Clown and Sunset Glow's tallies were exactly the same!

Dong Shanshan giggled and looked over to Hu Fei and the

program team staff offstage. "This is the first time such a situation has arisen. We never expected that there would be a tie, so let me seek the program team's views on this."

Offstage.

The program team staff gathered together to discuss this.

Flowing Time was the most tormented person onstage. His tally was so low that he could not bear to look on any further. It was really, really appalling to look at. Just choose a winner already and end it quickly. Why are you all still making me stand onstage with everyone? Are you people trying to ridicule me? Can't you come to a decision more quickly?!

The audience:

"Flowing Time lost so terribly!"

"Pfft, he was the one who started the clamoring and provoked The Clown a few days ago. But in the end, the outcome turned out like this? He still intended to seek justice for Li Yu? I'm already feeling embarrassed for him!"

"To the victor go the spoils!"

"Flowing Time is no match for The Clown!"

"Yeah, it's useless even if he practices another few years since these two singers are on totally different planes."

"I never expected a tie."

"I thought that Sunset Glow would win for sure."

"That's right. Even the majority of the judges were supporting Sunset Glow."

In fact, Zhang Ye himself was not prepared for this result. He also thought that Sunset Glow would be crowned this episode's Masked King. But he couldn't have expected that the audience would give him so much face. Zhang Ye was hoping that they would stop discussing any further and just declare Sunset Glow as the winner

of this episode. He was willing to forfeit this round automatically. But he definitely could not say that as it would be showing disrespect to Sunset Glow. The last time he lost on purpose was because he was targeting Li Yu. But he couldn't do that again as Sunset Glow would definitely not agree with it!

A few minutes later.

The outcome of the discussion was decided!

Dong Shanshan received the program team's instructions through her earpiece. "Mhm...mhm...yes, I understand." Then she smiled and announced, "Since who becomes each episode's Masked King is quite important as it affects the order of appearance in the grand finals of King of Masked Singers, our program team has decided to implement an additional round!"

The audience got excited the moment they heard!

"Wow!"

"An extra round?"

"Haha, that's great!"

"We get to listen to another two songs!"

"I bet Sunset Glow will win!"

"My bet is on The Clown! That guy's abilities can't be fathomed!"

Dong Shanshan looked at the two contestants and asked, "Do you two have any problems with that?"

Sunset Glow was in excellent condition today and she was highly competitive too. She glanced at The Clown, then nodded and said with a smile, "I don't have any problems with that!" It looked like she wanted to compete with The Clown to see who was better.

Zhang Ye smiled and said in return, "Then I have no problems with it either."

Chapter 1046: Deciding the tiebreaker match song!

In the recording studio.

The program team hammered out some details regarding the tiebreaker match.

Then, Dong Shanshan received the information through her earpiece and announced the rules for the tiebreaker with a perfect smile on her pretty face, "The tiebreaker match will begin soon. Due to the show's time constraint, each contestant will have two minutes of performance time. After they finish performing, six of the judges on the guessing panel will vote to choose this episode's Masked King."

The judges could vote?

Have the rules changed?

Chen Guang said with a laugh, "We hold the authority today."

Amy was also quite happy since they did not used to have the right to vote.

They understood the program team's intentions. The team must have wanted to prevent the show from progressing too monotonously, always following the same rules. Otherwise, the audience would get sick of watching it. They could make use of this tiebreaker match to make an adjustment and let it become a rule to follow in the future. If a tie happened again, they could use today's rules to decide on a winner.

Dong Shanshan looked at The Clown and Sunset Glow. "Our two singers?"

Sunset Glow said, "OK."

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I understand."

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Then would the two of you please start prepping now."

The two of them nodded and left the stage.

The cameras stopped rolling.

Dong Shanshan told the audience, "We break for 15 minutes."

Although the actual broadcast would seamlessly continue into the tiebreaker, at the live recording, there would definitely be a need to allocate some time for the contestants. As they had only prepared two songs today, and the need for a third song was due to unexpected circumstances, it was absolutely necessary to give The Clown and Sunset Glow some buffer time. It was easier for Sunset Glow as most mainstream songs would not be a problem for the band. They could easily play her accompaniment without much practice. But as The Clown's song selections were a little more troublesome since he was always singing originals, the tiebreaker match presented more difficulties for him.

Zhang Ye did not seem to mind as he was prepared to give up the title of Masked King.

Perhaps Sunset Glow could already see it. She suddenly stopped in her tracks in the corridor and turned around to look at him. "You don't seem too keen on winning today."

Zhang Ye said, "That's not true."

Sunset Glow said seriously, "I can sense it."

Zhang Ye felt a little embarrassed. A woman's intuition was really not something that should be trifled with. In truth, he did not treat the tiebreaker too seriously and was planning to just sing a random song. After all, Sunset Glow was probably someone he knew personally. Since she was in excellent shape today, he did not wish to compete against her for the title of Masked King.

Sunset Glow said, "I want a fair and square match. Can you oblige?"

Zhang Ye did not say anything.

Sunset Glow looked into his eyes and said, "Don't you concede to me."

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile. "I would never."

"Good." Sunset Glow nodded. "See you onstage."

Zhang Ye replied, "Yeah. I'll give it my best shot!"

Sunset Glow was happy. "I hope you'll walk the walk. I don't care for being the Masked King if you just hand it on a platter to me." Then she went to find Music Director Bai Yuanfei to discuss her song for the tiebreaker match.

In The Clown's waiting room.

Walking in, Zhang Ye felt a little embarrassed. Since Sunset Glow had put it so bluntly, what could he say? He also started to feel like he was disrespecting this stage and Sunset Glow!

Concede?

Go easy?

Actually, were they really any better than each other? Even if he did not hold back, he might not be able to beat Sunset Glow today. The thought he had was already belittling others in and of itself. Zhang Ye was a person who could accept criticism and was also critical of himself. Alright, I'll sing properly this time then. Whoever wants to be crowned Masked King this episode will have to depend on their individual talents!

But which song should he sing?

He had not prepared another song in advance!

Immediately, Zhang Ye turned serious. Giving it some thought, the songs sung in this episode's competition were too impressive and the audience's emotions had been brought to a high by the performances. If he had to choose a song for this tiebreaker match, Zhang Ye would not want to sing a fast song or one with high

notes. He'd prefer to sing a rather calm song.

Dong dong.

Someone knocked on the door.

Zhang Ye said to the outside, "Please enter."

Three people came in from outside. They were Han Qi, Hu Fei, and Dong Shanshan.

When he saw Dong Shanshan, Zhang Ye became nervous. Every time he met Dong Shanshan in the program team's workspace as The Clown, his entire person would be wary. Because she was not just anyone, but his university classmate of four years. In addition, after graduation, they had lived and worked together as colleagues, so Dong Shanshan knew Zhang Ye very well. He did not even dare to cross his legs in front of her as he was afraid she would recognize him instantly. As a result, his speech and actions all had to be "uncharacteristic" of him. For example, he folded his arms in a way which he usually did not.

Dong Shanshan said, "Teacher Clown."

The Clown looked at them.

Dong Shanshan asked, "Sunset Glow is just about done preparing and will be ready anytime. If you need more time here, we can still delay a bit more."

Hu Fei said, "If not, we can also leave the tiebreaker match's recording for after the elimination round is done. In any case, we skipped past the elimination round and went straight to recording the battle round just now."

The Clown said calmly, "It's alright."

Dong Shanshan confirmed with him, "Are you sure?"

The Clown nodded.

Dong Shanshan looked at Hu Fei. "Director Hu, shall we proceed as planned?"

"Yes," Hu Fei acknowledged.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Then I'll speak freely later."

Hu Fei said, "Sure. Thanks for the hard work."

Dong Shanshan looked at The Clown as she blinked and said, "You can continue preparing for now. We'll await your word, then?"

Han Qi said, "Teacher, you can do it!"

The Clown nodded and gazed at Dong Shanshan and the others as they left.

As the door was not fully closed yet, he could hear Hu Fei talking to Dong Shanshan. "Teacher Shanshan, I saw the info on your ID card and know that your birthday is next month. What would you like as a present?"

Dong Shanshan replied, "There's no need for that, Brother Hu."

"Then why don't we organize a birthday party for you?"

Dong Shanshan seemed to want to refuse him. "There's really no need to. Actually, my birthday is not—"

"Hur hur, that won't do," Hu Fei interrupted. "This is what our department's usual practice is. You're not exempt."

The door closed.

He could not hear the voices anymore.

Zhang Ye was stunned. Dong Shanshan's birthday? Next month? How could that be?

He immediately looked at the calendar, and then laughed. He facepalmed and silently cursed himself for being so harebrained. It was already that day? He had almost forgotten about it! He even forgot to send her his well-wishes! As her old classmate of many years, an old friend, and an old colleague, he really did not deserve to be called all that!

He was hoping to gift her a song now.

But which song?

Zhang Ye could not think of anything, but he remembered the lottery draw. So he simply opened the game ring's virtual screen and activated the Lucky Halo (Upgraded). In Lottery Draw (One), he added 500 additional stakes!

The wheel began to spin!

Spinning and spinning...

It spun and spun...

Finally, it stopped in the Skills Category region!

Gold Treasure Chests (Small) appeared!

[Guitar Skill Experience Book] × 500: Increases player's guitar skill experience.

Guitar?

How convenient.

Piano? Guitar? He was now equipped with these two performance skills!

After he deactivated the Lucky Halo, he narrowed his eyes to a slit.

Guitar.

Guitar.

Why not that song?

Alright then, that song it is!

Chapter 1047: Happy Birthday, Ms. Dong!

Around the stage.

Scattered voices were sounding from all around in the audience.

"Why isn't it starting yet?"

"Hurry up, I can't wait anymore."

"Good things are worth waiting for, haha. Don't worry!"

"It's already been 10 minutes? Just 5 more minutes and it's gonna start!"

"I'm really looking forward to the tiebreaker match between those two!"

"Speaking of performance ability, Flowing Time really isn't comparable to The Clown and Sunset Glow. It's really exciting to see them both fighting for the crown of Masked King in this episode!"

"I can't wait to see how it turns out!"

"Who do you guys think will win?"

"If we're talking about their form, Sunset Glow is totally unbeatable today!"

"The contestant's form isn't everything. Do you guys still remember the competition's first episode? The then Clown was so sick, and his voice had deteriorated so badly as well, so how could he be in good shape? Yet he was still crowned Masked King in the crucial first episode! The Clown has always been someone who's really unpredictable!"

"Are they coming on yet?"

The audience was getting excited and eager for the next match to begin.

Everyone was waiting for The Clown and Sunset Glow to take the

stage.

In the wings, Petal Shower and Spinach were also watching.

Spinach asked, "Sister Petal Shower, who do you think will win?"

Petal Shower laughed and said, "I'm more optimistic about Sunset Glow's chances today, but I'd like to hear what The Clown will sing."

Spinach's eyes lit up. "Me too. I just want to hear what he'll sing this time."

Dong Shanshan checked her watch and felt that it was almost time to begin. She went onto the stage in advance and had a short exchange with a few staff members to brief them on the things to look out for later.

Dong Shanshan said, "Hand the microphones to the contestants at the waiting area in a bit."

The staff said, "Got it, Teacher Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan said, "Those of you who are standing here, move a little to your right. You're blocking the third camera's view."

"OK."

"Understood."

After everything was set, Dong Shanshan stood there to catch a breather. She suddenly remembered Hu Fei's words and could not help but reveal a helpless smile. On the way here to the stage earlier, Xiao Lu and Dafei also seemed to be preparing for her "birthday" next month. The two of them did not put it clearly but were trying their best to find out what kind of things she liked. They were probably trying to prepare a gift for her. However, Dong Shanshan was too embarrassed to let them know that the actual day of her birthday was not next month.

It was today!

Today was the actual day of her birthday!

Not many people knew this!

Because of a mistake made during her birth in which her parents completed her birth registration late, the birthday shown on her household register and ID card was late by a full month. But as particulars were already exposed and her birthday was also posted for all to see online, no one knew that it was her birthday today and everyone believed it to be next month. In fact, in recent years, Dong Shanshan stopped explaining. She had always been the carefree type and since others thought that her birthday was on that day, she'd just let it be. Besides, she also felt quite helpless about it.

Her earpiece crackled.

"All departments, attention. All departments, attention. The contestants are ready and standing by."

"Ten seconds and counting down."

Dong Shanshan adjusted her suit and nudged her gold-rimmed glasses upward.

"Three..."

"Two..."

"One..."

Instantaneously, a glittering smile appeared on Dong Shanshan's face as she announced, "Next, we'll be heading into the tiebreaker match. Let's welcome — The Clown!"

Screaming came from the audience!

"The Clown!"

"Break a leg!"

"I love you!"

"I'm so looking forward to this! I'm really looking forward to this!"

"What song will he be singing? Will it be a Cantonese or a Hokkien song?"

"Eh? Where did the band go?"

The Clown walked onstage in his usual unhurried pace.

Chen Guang noticed it first. "Where's the band?"

Amy was startled. "Oh yeah, why isn't the band there?"

Everyone was dumbfounded when they saw The Clown walk toward where the house band should have been and pick up an electric guitar from among the musical instruments!

Spinach said in surprise, "A guitar?"

Petal Shower did not expect this either. "He even knows how to play guitar?"

Wang Zhuishu said, "What's this supposed to mean?"

Yao Jiancai asked with interest, "Is he going to sing and play at the same time?"

Zhang Xia gasped. "He's quite brave. He's going to be playing and singing at the same time on this stage?"

Singing and playing a guitar at the same time without any accompaniment might be workable in street or pub performances. But on a grand stage like this with such a large audience, this way of singing and performing was much too risky. It wasn't something most people could handle!

Dong Shanshan was stunned by this too. After she handed the stage to him, she went off and looked at The Clown curiously.

The Clown had taken his seat onstage. He clasped the guitar and adjusted himself while one hand strummed the strings to check the tuning.

Everyone focused their attention on him!

No one knew how he was going to sing or what song he'd be

singing.

Sunset Glow unwittingly made her way to the waiting area to look at The Clown onstage.

Zhang Ye shifted in his seat, then smiled.

He wanted to dedicate this song to a certain someone today, a very important person to him and was someone he liked a lot, someone who used to give him butterflies.

He could still remember the first time they met. It was during an English class in university. It would be a wonder if Zhang Ye, someone who got into Media College by tossing a pen to answer his English tests' multiple choice questions, could understand the English classes in university. The teacher had distributed a set of papers on that day, which gave him such a headache that he was crying out in his seat with worry. That made the female student seated right in front of him turn around. She looked at him and smiled. Zhang Ye could remember that smile with perfect clarity. Even today, he still couldn't forget that smile of hers.

It was very sweet.

And very beautiful.

Zhang Ye smiled.

As he strummed the guitar, a dulcet melody took to the air.

Chen Guang was stunned. "A ballad?"

Amy wondered, "Is he singing a ballad this time?"

The next moment, they were no longer talking.

The Clown started singing softly.

["Ms. Dong.](#)

"You've never forgotten about your smile.

"Even if you're just like me, eager to get senile.

"Ms. Dong.

"When your lips curl downward, it's so pretty.

"Like the pure water under Anhe Bridge in the city."

Dong Shanshan froze!

The judges and audience also froze!

Ms. Dong?

Which Ms. Dong?

Amy instinctively glanced at Dong Shanshan!

Many of the audience also instinctively looked toward Dong Shanshan!

The Clown smiled as he continued playing and singing.

"Ms. Dong.

"I, too, am a complicated creature.

"Saying one thing, replaying it inside as a feature.

"Ms. Dong.

"Time flew by that night at Gulou.

"Stranger, please give me a [Lanzhou](#)."

On the day after their English class, that female student was very patient as she explained the questions to him one by one. In fact, thinking about that right now, Zhang Ye had not really taken in anything she'd said on how to answer those questions. He only cared about looking at her while replying with "mhm's" and "ah's." But that female student still patiently explained things to him and even assured him that English was actually very simple. That was likely the most they had ever talked during their days in university. After their second year, there wasn't too much interaction between them.

Zhang Ye knew that they were people from two different worlds.

One was a fairy from heaven.

The other was just an earthly mortal.

But somehow, the two of them became best friends after graduation. She confided in him that she did not wish to get married and shared many other things with him. To others, she was someone who liked to laugh and didn't speak truthfully to people. But the person they knew was not the real her.

I know the real her.

Strong.

Carefree.

With many stories to tell.

Zhang Ye closed his eyes and sang.

"So, Ms. Dong, all those things may not be true.

"You aren't a schoolgirl with no stories to look to.

"Befriended a wild horse, but there's no prairie in my home.

"This makes me feel despair, Ms. Dong."

A lot of people were covered in goosebumps!

They were uncontrollably brought back to their days of youth!

Chen Guang said, "This..."

Wang Zhuishu's jaw dropped and he stared. "Wh-Who is he singing this for?"

In the wings, Sunset Glow and Petal Shower were looking at Dong Shanshan in shock!

Dong Shanshan was stunned, her eyes reddening as she gazed unblinkingly at the young man singing onstage. All sorts of images were suddenly conjured up by her mind's eye!

They flashed in front of her eyes one after another!

Touched!

Dazed!

Shocked!

Zhang Ye also experienced a lot of emotions. He remembered the times they were on campus when their group was chatting and fooling around. He remembered the times after graduation when that female student brought up those memories of their times on campus. That female student's expression at that time looked a little nostalgic and sentimental, or perhaps it was a look of sadness?

Zhang Ye continued playing and singing.

"Ms. Dong.

"You closed your book, and started talkin' 'bout the past.

"You said to let the first half of life be, tomorrow's still at last.

"Ms. Dong.

"You know I've shared enough goodbyes.

"And on one May morning, I finally lost sleep likewise.

"So, Ms. Dong, all those things may not be true.

"You aren't a schoolgirl with no stories to look to."

Tears were somehow rolling down Dong Shanshan's cheeks!

Is this song for me?

The Clown!

Do...you know me?

The Clown sang in a cappella.

"Befriended a wild horse, but there's no prairie in my home.

"This makes me feel despair, Miss Dong.

"So, Ms. Dong, all those things may be true.

"Who's gonna go out of their way to comfort that ignorant young man?

"I wanna be like you, ignore all those reasons.

"Cheer up.

"Ms. Dong."

The thrumming of the guitar fell silent.

The Clown's hands stopped moving.

He suddenly looked in the direction of Dong Shanshan and sang:
"Happy birthday.

"Ms. Dong."

The strumming of the guitar came back.

The melody and voice resonated throughout the studio!

When they heard the last verse, a lot of people were suddenly enlightened!

Hu Fei laughed and said, "So it's not a song for Teacher Shanshan."

Xiao Lu wiped her sweat away and said, "Yeah, I also got a fright. I thought that The Clown and Teacher Shanshan knew each other!"

People in the audience also heaved sighs of relief.

"Dong Shanshan's birthday is next month, right?"

"That's right, it's next month!"

"Then that song isn't for her!"

"I knew it! But that still gave me such a scare!"

However, when Dong Shanshan heard the last verse of The Clown's song, she had a totally different reaction from everyone else. Dong Shanshan's hair stood on end at that moment as she was dumbfounded with an astonished expression! No one should know it. There were not many people who knew when her actual birthday was! At this moment, Dong Shanshan was almost sure

that The Clown definitely knew her!

Happy birthday?

How did you know!

How did you know that today is my birthday?!

Who are you really?

The Clown!

Just who the hell are you?!

A brand of cigarettes

Chapter 1048: Who is the Masked King this episode?

He finished singing.

The Clown put down the electric guitar and bowed before exiting the stage.

Only then did the audience's applause gradually sound. Many people had not even come around from the images brought about by the vocals, but the song had already ended!

Just two minutes. That was how short it was.

"I haven't had enough of it yet!"

"Why is this song so good!"

"I like it so much!"

"Me too, I love this song to death!"

"[Ms. Dong](#)? Who was The Clown singing this for?"

"Who is Ms. Dong?"

"It doesn't sound like his lover, but it's definitely someone very important to him!"

"This song has such a good feel to it. This ballad really brought me back to the time when I was still in school!"

"Although I don't know what some of the verses mean or what the story behind it is, I'm sure that the Ms. Dong he is singing about would definitely understand. It's really good."

"Whose birthday is it today?"

"Me! It's my birthday today!"

"Is your surname Dong?"

"No, my surname's not Dong, but my second maternal aunt's husband's is."

"Get lost! Who's asking about your second maternal aunt's husband!"

The stage was emptied.

The audience was in heated discussion.

The judges were also exchanging their opinions.

Zhang Xia said, "This song is actually...how should I put it?"

Chen Guang shook his head. "It's not easy to describe."

Wang Zhuishu added, "Let's talk about this later, it should be Sunset Glow's turn now? Eh? Where's the host? Why hasn't anyone announced the next contestant?"

Sunset Glow was already on standby behind the door.

However, Dong Shanshan was still standing offstage in a daze. It was as though her soul had left her body as she stood there thinking about something. She even forgot to announce the next contestant.

Xiao Lu ran over. "Teacher Shanshan!"

Dong Shanshan turned around. "Ah?"

Dafei didn't know how to react. "What's the matter with you?"

Xiao Lu laughed and said, "The Clown has finished singing."

Only then did Dong Shanshan come around. She immediately went back onstage and said, "Let's welcome our next performer—Sunset Glow."

Dafei whispered to Xiao Lu, "The song that The Clown sang, could it really have been dedicated to Shanshan?"

"No way." Xiao Lu blinked and said, "Teacher Shanshan's birthday is next month. The dates just don't match."

Sunset Glow took the stage.

The house band also came on.

Zhang Ye did not go far. He stayed just offstage to listen to Sunset Glow's performance. Sweeping his peripheral vision, he realized that someone was watching him. He turned to look into the distance.

It was Dong Shanshan!

Zhang Ye smiled and looked away.

He was very satisfied with today's song and had been very serious when he sang it. He modified some parts of the lyrics like "fell in love with a wild horse" into "befriended a wild horse." Then, there was the part of "extinguishing your cigarette and reminiscing about the past" that got changed as Dong Shanshan did not smoke, as well as that ending verse of "happy birthday, Ms. Dong." He had sung it according to his personal style, not the original version by Song Dongye or Zuo Li's cover of "Ms. Dong." He had performed this song based on what he felt in his heart.

Sunset Glow's performance had begun.

"That day, we said nothing to each other.

"Standing at the bus stop, you frowned.

"When suddenly, I felt the urge to grab your hands.

"Yet, I did not.

"I did not."

It was another love song!

It was still as good a listen!

It was still as exquisite as before!

The Sunset Glow today had truly performed in a godly manner. It was as though she had been enlightened and suddenly had a breakthrough. Her entire scope of singing skills was fully embodied into this performance!

Even Zhang Ye couldn't help himself and wanted to shout about

how good it was!

The song ended!

The applause continued for a long time!

Zhang Ye was also smiling and clapping the wings.

Dong Shanshan had gone back onstage at some point in time. "Let's welcome The Clown back to the stage."

Zhang Ye strode out and made his way up.

Dong Shanshan still behaved very professionally. She kept a smile on her face and did not look at The Clown a second longer than required. "The tiebreaker match has come to an end. What do our judges have to say? Or perhaps we could also proceed straight to the voting. Remember, your votes will decide who becomes the Masked King this episode. Please choose carefully."

Yao Jiancai nodded. "Understood, Ms. Dong."

Dong Shanshan said, "Please vote then, Mr. Bite."

The judges laughed.

The audience egged them on.

Bite Building Materials. This was the name Zhang Ye had given Old Yao during their crosstalk when he teased him.

After some bantering, it was time to get to the main event.

Wang Zhuishu started the commenting. "I feel that Sunset Glow performed really well today. There's nothing I can find fault with at all, it's just that good. Whether it's her singing or emotion, it was all on point. The Clown's previous two songs were also especially good. But that third song called 'Ms. Dong,' I feel that it's not as good as the other two when it comes to the lyrics and melody. Of course, that's just my opinion. As I am a lyricist and composer, I'm very picky on these two aspects. I understand that it's not easy for an original to do well, not to mention that every song you've performed thus far has been an original. Since it's

everyone's first time listening to them, you're usually at a disadvantage, especially in a competition. But since you performed it on this stage, I have to evaluate it objectively."

The Clown laughed.

Dong Shanshan looked at Wang Zhuishu. "Then who do you choose?"

Wang Zhuishu said, "I'll be giving this vote of mine to Sunset Glow!"

Sunset Glow bowed in thanks.

The Clown clapped next to her.

Chen Guang spoke up, "Let me say a few words as well. This ballad is a rather quiet one and usually wouldn't require an electric guitar. But I can understand why The Clown would choose to play and sing simultaneously. It's due to the stage and set being quite large with a lot of audience members, and in this atmosphere, an acoustic guitar wouldn't be able to sustain the performance. That's why he chose to use an electric one. But, even though he restricted the noise to a very low level and controlled the vibrations when playing, I still found it to be too noisy. Perhaps I was the only one with this issue, so I shall reserve my feelings on it. I'll also give my vote to Sunset Glow."

Sunset Glow gave her thanks.

The Clown nodded and clapped.

Chen Yidong said, "I think the guitar part was alright. He played really well and I can accept the change from an acoustic guitar. I do not think it's a problem at all, although I couldn't really understand the song. So, I'm sorry, but I'll be voting for Sunset Glow."

Out of the six judges, Sunset Glow had gained three votes!

The audience began to bellyache.

"What's this?"

"Why are they all voting for Sunset Glow?"

"Damn, I liked 'Ms. Dong'!"

"Me too! It's such a good song!"

"What do you mean you can't understand?"

"The evaluations of the judges had all been great, but I think that they've finally reached their limit this time! It's too unprofessional!"

"If Sunset Glow gets another vote, she'll win!"

"Honestly, I don't care who wins. I feel that both of them performed incredibly. But if you say that the song, 'Ms. Dong,' is not good? Then I'll definitely disagree with you!"

Many in the audience complained!

However, the tiebreaker match's votes were for the judges to decide, not them.

At this moment, Zhang Xia said, "Maybe it's because I'm old, but I don't really understand what 'Ms. Dong' is trying to express either. Also, the song is somewhat mellow. The other ballads I know are like that too, but in the current setting, the song is definitely at a disadvantage. So I'll also vote for Sunset Glow. She definitely deserves to become the Masked King today!"

Four votes!

Sunset Glow had won!

It was Yao Jiancai's turn to speak. "'Ms. Dong' is a rather nice song. But compared to The Clown's previous songs, it was indeed a little lacking and couldn't showcase his technique as much. Although I've been supporting The Clown all this time and like him a lot too, I'll also be voting for Sunset Glow today."

5 votes!

Sunset Glow bowed. "Thank you, Teacher."

But for reasons unknown, Sunset Glow showed no trace of happiness or excitement. Her eyes turned to The Clown and seemed to contain a tinge of unhappiness.

The Clown smiled wryly.

What are you looking at me for?

What's up with that gaze of yours?

Afterwards, the last judge commented.

Amy was silent for a while before suddenly saying, "Before, even if I had a different opinion from the other judges, our general understanding was still quite similar. But that isn't the case today." She stood up, a little agitated, and protested for The Clown, "I know Sunset Glow and have confirmed who she is. Logically, I would vote for her since we've known each other for many years. But I'm really can't do so today. My vote will definitely and absolutely, a 100%, be given it to The Clown! There's no two ways about it!"

When many in the audience heard this, they suddenly started clapping for Amy!

Amy looked at the judges next to her. "So what if he used an electric guitar? Playing a ballad on an electric guitar is not something that nobody's done before![1.] This song was not nice? How can that be? By the time I listened to the third verse, I could feel goosebumps rising all over me." She rubbed her arms. "And they're still there now!"

Bba bba bba bba!

The audience's applause boomed again!

Chen Guang lifted his arms and pressed them down and said with a laugh, "Calm down, calm down."

Zhang Xia added, "To each their own. That's quite normal."

When Amy heard that, she sat down and said, "Yes, ballads are not considered mainstream, and most people would not use a ballad in a singing competition either, but this 'Ms. Dong' is no ordinary ballad. The Clown's singing also wasn't ordinary at all, so I really can't accept this result."

Wang Zhuishu smiled and said, "But it's five against one."

That's what the rules were.

With five out of six judges saying that "Ms. Dong" was just ordinary and with Sunset Glow already as today's Masked King, whatever Amy said had no effect on the outcome at this point.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Then let's congratulate Sunset Glow for taking the crown of Masked King this episode!"

Sunset Glow gave her thank you speech.

The Clown had already quietly departed from the stage.

Looking at Amy, Zhang Ye smiled inside. He rather liked this girl as she spoke without qualms and seemed even more headstrong than him. In fact, Zhang Ye could accept this result. It wasn't that he was worse than Sunset Glow, but that he knew that back in his previous world, "Ms. Dong" wasn't an instant hit. Sometimes, after listening to it several times, one would start thinking of their own "Ms. Dong." Afterwards, they would start falling in love with this song until it got out of control. This was why Zhang Ye did not mind the result. If he had really wanted to become the Masked King today, he wouldn't have chosen to sing this song.

It was fine if the judges didn't like it.

Even if the audience didn't like it, that was alright too.

As long as Dong Shanshan liked it—that was all that mattered. As long as Dong Shanshan could understand it, it was good enough. Today, this song was meant for Dong Shanshan alone!

Happy birthday.

Ms. Dong.

Chapter 1049: Zhang Ye, you're The Clown, aren't you?

Later that afternoon.

Recording continued into the elimination round.

In his waiting room, Zhang Ye called Yang Shu.

"Hello, Little Yang."

"Senior Bro."

"Come and pick me up."

"Alright, I'll be there immediately."

He had planned to leave after he finished recording his parts, but with Yang Shu saying that she'd be there immediately turning into half an hour later, he got a call from her. She sounded embarrassed.

"Senior Bro."

"Are you here?"

"No, I...I'm still stuck on the road."

"Where are you?"

"Xizhimen Interchange."

"Wow, how'd you end up all the way at Xizhimen Interchange?"

"I got lost."

"But you dropped me off here this morning!"

"But weren't you giving me directions this morning?"

"Use the built-in GPS!"

"Uh, I don't know how to use it."

This junior sister of his was way too unreliable!

Whatever! She can come whenever she arrives. I'll just wait.

Zhang Ye was forced to stay behind to watch the competition between Petal Shower, Spinach, and Marshal Persona. Among the three of them, two would be eliminated. It was very cruel, but those were the rules. In the end, Petal Shower won to almost no surprise. Petal Shower was feeling a little unwell today, probably because her menstrual cycle had arrived as she had been complaining of stomach cramps earlier. She was in average shape, but no matter how average she was, she was still a strong competitor. She couldn't possibly lose at this stage.

Marshal Persona did not reveal himself and exited the stage, keeping the audience in suspense.

Spinach chose to take her mask off. At the moment of the reveal, gasps of astonishment filled the studio!

It was a very pretty young lady!

She wasn't old and looked to be around twenty, maybe even younger!

Liao Yiqi!

It was Liao Yiqi!

"Wow!"

"It's her!"

"What the!"

"H-How does she know how to sing?"

The judges had already figured out who she was, but many audience members hadn't!

Liao Yiqi. She was the granddaughter of a famous Peking opera master, a professional Peking opera singer. Liao Yiqi was also very well-known and had even gone on the Central TV Spring Festival Gala before, but of course that was to perform Peking opera! No one had expected that they would see her on this stage. Wasn't this

crossover too huge of a leap? A Peking opera singer singing pop songs? And she even sang quite well?

All the judges gave her a standing ovation!

The entire studio audience also stood up and cheered for her!

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Liao Yiqi!"

Spinach's eyes reddened. She was very touched and clasped her hands together to thank everyone. She said, "Thank you, thank you, teachers. Thank you, everyone, thank you!"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "There's still the revival round! We'll be waiting for your return!"

Liao Yiqi, also known as Spinach, looked at the judges. "I definitely will!"

This reveal had greatly surprised everyone and left them in disbelief!

Meanwhile.

Yang Shu finally arrived from the upper side of Xizhimen Interchange. She called Zhang Ye to tell him that she had arrived.

In his waiting room, Zhang Ye was just about to get changed and leave. But there was a knock on the door and in came Sunset Glow.

Zhang Ye was startled. "What's up?"

Sunset Glow gazed at him. "Didn't I say to not go easy on me?"

Zhang Ye laughed dryly. "I didn't."

"If you're like that, what's the point of me grabbing the title of Masked King?" Sunset Glow said coolly. She wanted to become the Masked King at least once, but why did it now feel like she had been given the win?

Zhang Ye finally understood why Sunset Glow had seemed a little unhappy despite getting crowned as the Masked King. So this was the reason. He said at once, "You became the Masked King today based on merit. Did you think that I didn't sing seriously?"

Sunset Glow quietly nodded. "Your song was simply average."

But Zhang Ye laughed. "That might not be true."

Sunset Glow looked at him with some doubt.

Zhang Ye tacked on, "You don't believe me? Then let's wait and see." So many people felt that "Ms. Dong" was just average? They even thought that I was holding back? You guys are really funny. Would I need to do that? Forget it. It doesn't matter what I say now. Let's just wait till after tomorrow's broadcast and we'll know how this song does. Zhang Ye, in truth, did not agree with the judges' evaluation of the song. He was waiting to smack them in the face. But of course, it might be his face getting smacked. He couldn't say for sure since it was a different world after all, so who knew?

20 minutes later.

Zhang Ye had quietly sneaked out of Beijing Television. He found his car in the parking lot and opened the door to the front passenger seat and got in.

Yang Shu looked at him cautiously. "Senior Bro."

Zhang Ye said, "Drive."

"OK." Yang Shu quickly started the engine.

As they drove, Zhang Ye started criticizing her and also taught her how to operate the GPS. Then he continued scolding her.

Yang Shu listened in silence.

Later, when Zhang Ye realized that she probably couldn't recognize the roads because she had arrived in Beijing recently, he stopped chiding her. He started humming a ditty in a good mood.

Yang Shu gave him a furtive glance, then heaved a sigh of relief.

Yang Shu might act impetuously around others, but she was still very afraid of Zhang Ye.

At this moment, a call came in!

This was a call that Zhang Ye was rather unwilling to pick up right now!

It was Dong Shanshan!

Zhang Ye cleared his throat and answered with a chuckle: "Hello, Shanshan. What's up? Who won today? I didn't get to watch the latter half of the recording since I went home."

The voice on the other end stayed silent for a moment.

Dong Shanshan then said: "Go on, keep pretending."

Zhang Ye faked surprise and said: "Ah? Pretend about what?"

Dong Shanshan probed: "You're The Clown, aren't you?"

"Whoa!" Zhang Ye said in surprise: "What are you talking about? The Clown? You must really have a rich imagination!"

Dong Shanshan laughed and said: "If it's not you, then who is it?"

Zhang Ye said: "How would I know who it is? I would like to know too. Hey, why'd you even guess that it was me? It's not like you don't know what my singing sounds like, right?"

Dong Shanshan rolled her eyes and said: "You can even fly a plane, so who knows if you could suddenly sing too? I wouldn't be surprised if you did!"

Zhang Ye couldn't deny this.

"So tell me. Don't lie to me!"

Zhang Ye coughed and said: "It's really not me."

Dong Shanshan said coldly: "Today at the studio, that last verse of 'Ms. Dong' was to wish me a happy birthday. If it wasn't you,

who would it be? Who else knows that it's my birthday today?"

Zhang Ye pretended to be taken aback. "Huh? It's your birthday today? Isn't it next month?"

"You don't know?" Dong Shanshan blinked.

Zhang Ye said: "Why would I know? Have you ever told me when your birthday is?"

Dong Shanshan thought for a moment and suddenly felt uncertain. "I haven't told you before."

"Then that settles it!" Zhang Ye said: "Since I don't know, does that mean The Clown knows you? Could he be a relative of yours?"

Dong Shanshan said in a speechless manner: "I don't have any friends or family who can sing that well! There's only you who's worth being suspicious about. Are you sure that it's not you?"

"It's not me," Zhang Ye lied without even blinking.

With Zhang Ye standing his ground, Dong Shanshan got confused. She said: "Alrighty then, I probably guessed wrong. I'll go think about who it could be."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye could finally sigh a breath of relief and he laughed. Dong Shanshan had indeed not told him her birthday, but that did not mean that Zhang Ye did not know. When they were in college, Dong Shanshan had told one of her close friends that her birth date had been registered wrong. Zhang Ye was nearby at the time and accidentally overheard it. As he had liked Dong Shanshan at the time, he remembered this quite well. However, he had never given Dong Shanshan a birthday present in all these years.

Haha.

Keep guessing, just guess whoever you want.

In any case, this bro will never admit to it!

Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro, we're almost there."

Zhang Ye acknowledged her and said, "Pull over to the curb and help me get some cigarettes. There's no more at home."

"OK, Senior Bro," Yang Shu responded.

All of a sudden, his phone rang again.

Dong Shanshan said: "Are you sure that it's really not you?"

Zhang Ye said anxiously: "It's not."

Dong Shanshan gave a plain sound of understanding and said: "Swear to me. If it's really you, you won't be able to get breakfast when you want to buy some, and all the cigarettes that you buy will turn out to be fake, the same for any alcohol that you have..."

She rambled on for a minute about this.

Zhang Ye was dumbfounded!

Fuck!

You're too ruthless!

"Hurry up and swear to it!" Dong Shanshan urged.

Zhang Ye stemmed his tears and said: "Alright, I'll swear to it."

Only then did Dong Shanshan hang up.

Yang Shu parked the car. "Senior Bro, what cigarettes do you want?"

Zhang Ye was about to burst into tears. "Forget it. I don't want them anymore. Let's head back."

Chapter 1050: 'Ms. Dong' is a hit!

Saturday.

The fourth episode of King of Masked Singers was broadcast!

All over the country, countless people waited at their televisions and tuned into Beijing Television to catch the broadcast. As the show went on, a lot of people were getting excited and astonished by it. There were many discussions happening online as well!

"It's starting!"

"Wow, Spinach's singing is quite good!"

"Someone revealed that she is Liao Yiqi!"

"Ah? The Peking opera singer? Surely not?"

"It's true. Just listen to her singing. It really sounds like her!"

"It's Flowing Time's turn!"

"Damn, there's already no need to guess anymore based on that accent. It's definitely Teacher Zhao Qiquan!"

"He's the best singer in the Hokkien music scene! So he can also sing in Mandarin this well?"

"Haha, wait till he sings a Hokkien song. Then you'll know just how amazing he really is!"

"It's The Clown turn now!"

"Let's see what he's gonna sing!"

"The country's ugliest celebrity, lol."

"That poll was so funny! I keep laughing each time I see it!"

However, when The Clown's first song began, a lot of them could no longer laugh.

...

At a recording company.

"Don't be like this, OK?"

"Brother Liu, can you please listen to my song?"

"There's no need to. You won't make it. The company won't sign someone like you."

"Brother Liu! Give me a chance, I—"

"Don't tell me any more. I've already made it very clear to you, so just leave already. You don't have the looks, so my advice to you is to not take this route. You won't make it in this industry."

The young man silently left the recording company. With the dark night sky hanging overhead, he walked on feeling quite lost. He did not know where to go and how he should continue on from here. That was already the third company he approached. Every time he sent a demo to the recording companies, he would always get invited for an interview. However, when they saw him in person, those companies all turned him down without an exception. This was all because he did not have good looks nor the face of a star!

He liked music. In fact, he liked it so much that he felt that it was as important as his life. However, there was an insurmountable wall in front of him that he could not breach!

He had no way of doing so!

He really did not know what else he could do!

Give up?

Or maybe he should just forget about it?

Suddenly, he heard a voice singing.

The young man stopped in his tracks and looked toward a street food stall. When he saw the singer on the TV and heard his singing, he was shocked.

"I'm ugly,

"but I am so tender.

"Cold on the outside,

"passionate inside.

"That's who I am!"

The singer on TV put a hand over his chest.

"I'm ugly,

"but I have music and beer.

"A little lowly,

"a little fearful,

"but I'll never cower!"

The people who were eating at the street food stall were all dumbfounded when they heard the song. They could only stare in shock at the television.

The young man was also stunned in his tracks. Suddenly, a gush of tears poured from his eyes.

By the time the song finished, the young man's fists were tightly clenched. He wiped the tears off his face, then turned to walk off toward a bright light in the distance. His footfalls contained an unprecedented determination!

Thank you, Mr. Clown!

I know what I have to do now!

...

On Weibo.

"How spectacular!"

"Damn! This song is bursting with greatness!"

"I'm ugly, but I am so tender?"

"I cried listening to it!"

"Holy shit, I was the same!"

"I can't stop crying. Goddammit, what song is this!"

"It's such a nice song!"

"He came up with this song right after he got voted as the Ugliest Celebrity?"

"The champion, he'll definitely become this episode's champion!"

"Don't forget that there's still Flowing Time."

This "I'm Ugly But Tender" created a huge shockwave online. Countless netizens joined in the discussion as many of them were touched and inspired by the song!

Soon after.

When it was time for the battle for Masked King, everyone was once again shocked!

"Flowing Time really is Zhao Qiquan!"

"This Hokkien song is great!"

"Of course! This is Zhao Qiquan we're talking about!"

"This is the easiest singer to guess by far!"

"Let's see how the matchup between him and The Clown will go. Have you guys noticed that a ton of people in the audience are speaking Hokkien? Just listen, they're all cheering in Hokkien!"

"Yeah, what's with that?"

"Then won't Zhao Qiquan win for sure? Will there be any suspense to the results?"

Then The Clown sang.

"Don't despair when you're in the mourn.

"Don't be afraid when you're forlorn.

"Passing time without any hope,

"Going down every day to tope,

"A person without a soul is like a scarecrow."

The netizens were dumbfounded!

The audience was dumbfounded!

The industry insiders who were watching the show were also dumbfounded!

It was Hokkien!

The Clown could also fucking sing a Hokkien song?

And it was even an original that no one had ever heard of?

"This is bad for Flowing Time!"

"How painful!"

"Pfft! I'm dying of laughter!"

"Teacher Zhao Qiquan's fine reputation will be destroyed today!"

"He has as good as fallen to The Clown!"

"He's worse than The Clown, yet he still clamored for a match against him. Seems like he's the fool this time!"

"This 'Strive Hard to Succeed' sounds like an extremely good song!"

"Godly tune! An absolute godly tune!"

"He sang it so well!"

"Where does he get all his songs from?"

...

Meanwhile.

Zhang Yuanqi was currently on the phone with her manager, Fang Weihong.

"Are you watching King of Masked Singers?"

Fang Weihong said loudly: "I'm watching it. Who on earth is The

Clown!"

"I was just about to ask you: Have you found out who he is yet?"

Fang Weihong said: "I totally can't find anything. You're not the only one who is concerned about this—everyone else in the industry wants to know who he is as well. But there are no clues to follow at all, and now he's even singing a Hokkien song too? He's a singer who knows how to sing Hokkien songs? This has widened the scope even further! The clues are too confusing! I suspect that The Clown is deliberately confusing the public because he's afraid that he'll get recognized. He's purposely trying to mislead us!"

They were completely confused!

...

At a recording company.

A vice president of the company made five calls in a row.

"Check! Check thoroughly!"

"But—"

"No buts! I want an answer as to who The Clown really is!"

"President Qi, I really can't find out. I-I've already asked everyone!"

"Then ask again! I don't believe that he broke out of some stone. Who in the industry would not know a singer as amazing as him? How can that be possible?! I want to know everything about him. If he doesn't have a contract with any recording company, we'll sign him immediately. If he's already contracted to one, then we'll steal him away at all costs! Can't you see? This man has the makings of a king!"

"I-I understand!"

...

On TV.

The voting for the episode's Masked King began!

The netizens were either anticipating it or feeling nervous. Many of them were "shouting" for their favorite singer's name online. When the netizens saw that the final results indicated a tie between The Clown and Sunset Glow, and with Dong Shanshan announcing the implementation of a tiebreaker match, they got excited!

"Awesome!"

"We can get to listen to another two songs now!"

"Go, The Clown, go!"

"Sunset Glow, you can do it!"

Afterwards.

The Clown went on stage.

The studio was filled with a song that became extremely popular for several years back in Zhang Ye's previous world, "Ms. Dong."

The Clown strummed his guitar as he sang.

"Ms. Dong.

"You've never forgotten about your smile.

"Even if you're like me, eager to get senile.

"Ms. Dong.

"When your lips curl downward, it's so pretty.

"Like the pure water under Anhe Bridge in the city."

...

The next day.

Sunday morning.

The air quality today was quite good. When Zhang Ye looked out the window, he saw white clouds and a blue sky.

Zhang Ye stretched his back before getting out of bed. Seeing the rather rare blue sky, he was feeling quite satisfied as he had played a part in contributing to it. Although he had been castigated and hated by a lot of people after the reveal of Zhang Ye's Documentary on Air Pollution in China that eventually led to his soft ban, Zhang Ye did not feel a tinge of regret whenever he saw a sky like today's.

After breakfast, he went to read up on Weibo.

He was stunned to find that there were many critical voices on his Weibo notifications.

For a person like Zhang Ye who often offended people on a large scale, his first reaction when he saw these critical voices was to wonder whether they were all aimed at him. This was because out of all those large scale scolding battles that happened on Weibo, the forums, or Tieba each year, 60-70% of them were targeted at Zhang Ye. He was feeling a little guilty, but this bro hadn't really stirred up any trouble recently, had he? I haven't even appeared much in public, no? When he read more carefully, he realized that the online criticism was not aimed at him!

"The Clown lost? Go fuck yourselves!"

"Were those judges all blind?"

"Do you all know music? How can 'Ms. Dong' not be nice? Oh my god!"

"I really have to give it to those judges on the guessing panel!"

"Amy was the only one with taste!"

"I could not hold myself back after I listened to this song once yesterday and played it on repeat over 20 times through the night! Over 20 times! How could the judges not vote for The Clown? I really have nothing to say to that!"

"That song was really great!"

"There should be a version of a 'Ms. Dong' in everyone's heart as

well! But clearly, there's nothing at all in the hearts of those judges!"

"The Clown sang really well! Why wasn't he crowned Masked King this episode?"

"I like Sunset Glow too and I feel that she performed incredibly in the most recent episode. But I have to admit that for the two songs at the end, it was The Clown who sang better!"

"'Ms. Dong' was judged to be not good by Chen Guang, Zhang Xia, and the others. I'm speechless!"

"The entire song tells a story!"

"I don't know who The Clown was singing it to, but when I heard the song, my tears fell. No matter who that lady is whose surname is Dong, I would also like to wish her a 'Happy birthday, Ms. Dong!'"

Countless netizens were refusing to accept the result. They were all complaining on Weibo, and some of them were even flinging abuse at the outcome!

There were also sudden changes on the Top Chinese Music Chart!

The daily music chart's ranking had been published!

Some people felt that Sunset Glow's second song should have been ranked first. However, that song was only ranked in third place. Some people thought that The Clown's "I'm Ugly But Tender" should have been in first place. However, that song was only ranked in second place. "Strive Hard to Succeed" was ranked fourth on the daily music chart!

As for which song was in first place?

It was actually "Ms. Dong"!

And it was even far ahead of the second and third place songs!

This song had been a hit since last night. And today, it got even more popular, so popular that things got out of hand. All over the

Internet, people were discussing this song and the controversy of why The Clown had not become the Masked King in the most recent episode!

...

Old Chen's house.

Fan Wenli had already made breakfast. "You misjudged it, didn't you?"

Chen Guang looked at his phone and couldn't help but give a wry smile. "I've been face smacked, right?"

"Yes," Fan Wenli laughed.

Chen Guang rubbed his cheeks and could somehow feel a little pain.

At other locations.

When Wang Zhuishu saw the Top Chinese Music Chart's rankings, he was dumbfounded!

Chen Yidong was speechless.

So was Yao Jiancai.

And Zhang Xia.

This ranking had caught them completely off guard!

That "Ms. Dong" which none of them had thought well of turned out to be the most talked about and widespread song of the songs sung yesterday! Now, they could not deny it even if they wanted to. This was because the market's reaction to a work was the most direct and fastest judgment of all!

They had misjudged the song!

They had truly misjudged the song!

This Clown was way too scary!

Chapter 1051: Attention and speculation from the industry!

On this Sunday morning, the lyrics of "Ms. Dong" and discussions about it could be seen all over the Internet. All over the country, any lady whose surname was Dong suddenly became popular without any warning! On the music platform that was working with Beijing Television, the single sung on the show, "Ms. Dong," had already broken 10 million plays. And this was merely 12 hours after the broadcast! The song Sunset Glow sang in her match against this "Ms. Dong" had only garnered about 2.1 million plays. It was almost a five times difference!

"Thank you to The Clown for singing such a touching song!"

"This is my favorite song of the year!"

"My wife's surname is Dong!"

"My girlfriend's surname is also Dong. I finally know how I'll be proposing to her. I've already bought a ring, so I'll just sing this song for her tomorrow. Wish me luck, everyone!"

"Congratulations!"

"Good luck, bro!"

"Best wishes!"

Back at home.

Even Zhang Ye found this turn of events a little unexpected. He knew that "Ms. Dong" was a good song that could be easily overlooked, but he did not think that it would be so well-received in this world.

Suddenly, his cell phone's text message tone beeped.

It was from the phone meant for The Clown.

An unfamiliar number. "Hi, this is Sunset Glow."

Zhang Ye was taken aback, but replied: "Hi."

"I got your number from the program team. I just wanted to let you know something. I take back what I said to you yesterday at Beijing TV."

"No worries."

"I'm not being polite here. Rather, I listened to 'Ms. Dong' 7-8 times in a row yesterday. It really is a good song."

"Thanks."

"If the tiebreaker had been decided by audience vote, then you would have been yesterday's Masked King."

Zhang Ye immediately replied: "Not for sure."

"For sure."

"It's really not for sure. That song I sang was never meant to be a competition song."

"A good song is a good song. It has nothing to do with whether it's suitable for a competition."

"Perhaps."

"I'm looking forward to your songs next episode."

"Same here. I'm looking forward to yours too."

Sunset Glow sent: "See you next week."

"See you next week."

Their text message conversation was very simple, but Zhang Ye was starting to learn more and more about Sunset Glow's behavior and character. In his mind, a vague figure was starting to appear that would match Sunset Glow. He had already more or less guessed who Petal Shower and Sunset Glow were. They were both people he knew, and one of them was even a rather close friend of his with whom he had a lot of dealings with. However, Zhang Ye knew that even though he could guess their identities, they would

never be able to guess his. He had put up too many smoke screens, so even if there were anyone in the industry who did an extremely detailed analysis, they still wouldn't find out who he was. They would never even start to suspect him.

Zhang Ye chuckled and felt that this was really quite interesting and fun.

In the Celebrity Goof Group, there was a flurry of activity today.

Ning Lan: "@ChenGuang @FanWenli Old Chen, Old Fan, are you two around?"

Chen Guang appeared. "I just woke up." Then he sent a yawning emoji.

Ning Lan: "Do you have any tickets to the live recording of King of Mask Singers? Help me get five of them. A few of my friends who would like to attend the studio recording have approached me for help."

Chen Guang: "Five tickets?"

Ning Lan: "Yep, the more the better."

Chen Guang said: "I might still be able to get one or two tickets, but it's gonna be difficult to get five or more of them."

Huo Dongfang sent a nose-picking emoji. "I want three tickets too. A few relatives from my hometown came to visit and said that they really wanted to attend the live recording. Old Chen, I'm depending on you."

Another movie star said: "I want a ticket too. Are there any left?"

To be a part of this celebrity chat group, everyone had to be at least a B-lister. In the industry, every one of them was more highly revered than the last. If they themselves wanted to attend the recording, Beijing Television would more than welcome them to do so and make all the necessary arrangements for it to happen. But as they wanted to get the tickets for their friends instead, they

found it harder to approach the television station. First, it was unnecessary to do so. Second, a favor owed to a television station was not so easily repayable. It just wasn't worth all that trouble to get a few tickets.

Chen Guang: "Do you guys take me for a scalper?"

Fan Wenli spoke: "Hur hur, it's no use approaching Old Chen for help on this anyway. He doesn't have that great an influence. Isn't Zhang Ye in the group as well? Why don't you guys ask him instead?"

Xiaodong: "I'll help to @ZhangYe for you guys."

Ning Lan said: "Oh yeah! I've totally forgotten about Zhang Ye!"

At home, Zhang Ye heard this notification on his cell phone. He opened up the group chat and replied without hesitation: "Sure, I got it. You need around 10 tickets, right?"

Ning Lan: "Correct."

Huo Dongfang: "Will it be a bother? If it is, then forget it."

Zhang Ye: "It's nothing."

Zhang Ye then made a call.

A while later, he typed: "I've arranged for them. I'll leave a number here for you guys. 138XXXXXXXXX. Get your friends to go to the studio on Friday and call this number. Someone will come out to bring them in afterwards."

Ning Lan sent a smiley face. "Thanks, Zhang'er."

Huo Dongfang: "Thank you very much."

In Beijing Television, Zhang Ye could be considered rather influential. Although he did not really take part in the current production run of the show and was really more of an executive producer in name, everyone knew how much Zhang Ye's words were worth with the program team. His words were as important as Executive Director Hu Fei's!

Ning Lan: "King of Masked Singers has gotten really popular these days."

Zhang Ye said with a laugh: "Sister Ning, are you interested in joining the competition?"

Ning Lan: "Haha, forget about me. My terrible voice? I haven't sung in such a long time."

Xiaodong: "Teacher Zhang, you haven't been gaining much popularity recently. You'll soon be replaced if it goes on like this."

Zhang Ye simply sent a "yeah."

Xiaodong: "Why don't you try to release an album? I know a few people in recording companies who could tailor-make some songs for you. You can just release it online since being banned or not won't matter."

Zhang Ye sent a neutral face emoji.

Ning Lan was amused. "He can't even sing!"

Huo Dongfang also said: "I've heard Zhang Ye's 'A Letter to Home' before. It's rather good. But as for cutting an album...uh, I think it's better not to think about that. I think it's pretty unlikely that'll happen. Cough cough." He was already putting it out quite tactfully.

Xiaodong said: "He won't be able to sing live for sure, but it might be worth a try in the recording studio. At worst, he'll have to record a song multiple times. If it doesn't work the first time, try another ten times. If ten times don't work, try twenty times. There'll surely be a few times when it's good enough. Besides, they can also tune his singing to sound better than it is. Technology's so advanced nowadays. They can even fix someone's completely out of tune singing."

Zhang Ye: "Thank you, Xiaodong. But I'll pass."

Xiaodong: "OK, but if you need anything, feel free to ask me."

There's always a way no matter how badly you sing, so don't worry."

Zhang Ye was smiling on the inside. "Sure."

Zhang Yuanqi suddenly appeared: "Hello, comrades."

"Whoa, what a rare guest."

"Sister Zhang, hello."

"Sister Zhang is here?"

"You're up this early?"

A few familiar names were joking around with her.

Zhang Yuanqi said: "I'm still in bed right now. Xiaodong just PMed me and suggested that we get the other two members of Spring Garden into this group as well. One of them is Amy, the other is Li Xiaoxian. I'm here to communicate this and see what everyone thinks. We can have a vote to decide."

The Goof Group could be considered a very famous group in the whole of the entertainment industry. Not just anyone could join it, as there were many big names and elites of the industry in it. The group didn't really invite anyone to join, and there were only several dozen people who were members of this group. Zhang Ye was the last person to have joined the group before this.

Xiaodong cheekily said: "Since they're my good friends and my teammates, I'll abstain from speaking."

Although that was what she said, Zhang Ye received a PM from Xiaodong very soon after.

Xiaodong secretly said: "Teacher Zhang, please help!"

Followed by four pitiful expression stickers in a row.

Zhang Ye was amused. "Alright, I know what to do."

Xiaodong sent a crying emoji. "Thank you!"

Zhang Ye then said in the Goof Group: "I'll allow it. Amy's

popularity is getting higher and higher these days, and I believe it's also just a matter of time for Li Xiaoxian. With friends as good as these, we must get them into the group ASAP!"

Huo Dongfang said: "I also feel that it's OK."

Chen Guang: "After Amy appeared on those episodes of King of Masked Singers, she indeed became more popular. She also has a great character; I've spoken to her privately a few times. I find her to be quite friendly, so I'll definitely support her. As for Li Xiaoxian, there's even more nothing to say. We already know her identity. I suppose everyone here has realized as well?"

Ning Lan: "I don't have any problems with it either. We can let them join."

Quite a few people gave their opinions and a majority of them felt that it was OK.

Zhang Yuanqi said: "Alright, I don't have any complaints either. So let's invite them in."

Before long, a group notification appeared.

Zhang Yuanqi has invited Amy into Goof Group.

Zhang Yuanqi has invited Li Xiaoxian into Goof Group.

"Let's welcome the newbies!"

"Welcome!"

"A warm welcome to you!"

Everyone was very friendly. Even a Heavenly King appeared to welcome them.

Amy was stunned. "My god, is this the legendary group I've heard about?"

Ning Lan said happily: "It's the Goof Group."

Li Xiaoxian said quietly: "Hello, seniors."

Amy: "Ahhhhh, I've finally been admitted into the Goof Group!"

How exciting! Ah, Sister Zhang! Ah, Sister Ning Lan! Wow, even Teacher Zhang Ye is here!"

In the Spring Garden, the most well-known member definitely had to be their leader, Xiaodong. Compared to her, even though the other two members were very popular as well, they were behind her by quite a bit. As a result, the number of big names in fields other than music that Amy and Li Xiaoxian knew personally could not really be considered that many and their contact with those people was not that great. Xiaodong had pushed for them to join the group mainly because she wanted to help them network some more. If they could become familiar with these people, they would definitely have it easier in the future. Like the time Ning Lan and her team were encircled by the martial artists. Zhang Ye had gone to help her after she sent a message for help in the group. They were all about looking out for one another.

Ning Lan was one of the group administrators and would usually join in the conversation whenever there was one. Zhang Yuanqi and some of the other Heavenly Kings and Queens might have been the most popular celebrities in the group, but as their time was very limited, they didn't usually appear to chat in the group. So a lot of the matters were handled by Ning Lan.

Ning Lan said: "Amy, Xiaoxian, if there's any trouble you girls meet with in the future, just holler at us in the group. Don't be shy."

Amy: "Got it."

Li Xiaoxian: "Thank you, seniors."

Huo Dongfang asked: "Amy, who is The Clown?"

Amy: "Um, I don't know too."

Ning Lan asked: "Does Xiaoxian know?"

Li Xiaoxian said: "I'm not sure either."

Ning Lan: "Old He was asking me today if I knew who The Clown

was. I bet he was trying to scoop him up for the company."

Chen Guang: "Old He? You mean the chairman of your company?"

Ning Lan: "Yeah. A lot of people in the industry have now set their sights on the trio of The Clown, Petal Shower, and Sunset Glow. The other two contestants' identities have been more or less confirmed. Only The Clown does no one have any clue about!"

Zhang Ye laughed, then closed the chat app.

Chapter 1052: A Children's Day singing contest?

Wednesday.

June 1, Children's Day.

Early in the morning, Zhang Ye was sound asleep when he suddenly felt someone prodding him.

"Zhang Ye!"

"Unh."

"Zhang Ye, get up!"

"Eh?"

"Get up!"

His arm was being shaken violently.

Zhang Ye couldn't continue sleeping. When he opened his eyes and saw that it was Chenchen who came, he frowned and made a shooing motion with his hand, seething, "Leave, leave." Then he turned around and went back to sleep.

Chenchen was so angry that she went to complain, "Grandpa, Grandma, Zhang Ye is lazing around in bed!"

His mother went into his room angrily and shouted, "Chenchen is here! Hurry and get up so that you can take the child out to play!"

Zhang Ye said in annoyance, "Play what?"

His father also came in and said, "It's Children's Day today. Get up quickly."

Zhang Ye sighed, "What about Old Rao? Why don't you get Old Rao to take her instead?"

"You have two interviews scheduled, and there's also an award

presentation this afternoon. Didn't Chenchen's aunt become your agent? She's already gone out to handle all that for you, so how would she have any time today? She brought the child here early this morning and mentioned that it was Children's Day, so she wanted you to take Chenchen out to play." His mother grumbled, "Get up already."

At this, Zhang Ye was no longer annoyed. "Alright, alright, I'll do it."

He got out of bed, went to wash up, then ate breakfast.

Chenchen seemed pretty excited as she kept urging him to hurry up.

"Zhang Ye, brush your teeth faster.

"Zhang Ye, eat faster.

"Hurry up."

Zhang Ye had a terrible headache from her nagging. "Where do you want to go? Why the rush?"

Chenchen said, "I want to go to the haunted house at the amusement park!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Going to an amusement park on Children's Day? You really don't think that it wouldn't be crowded?"

His mother stared at him and said, "What's with all your nonsense? Hurry up!"

"Fine, fine, fine. We'll go to the amusement park, OK?"

A little after 8 AM.

They arrived at the Beijing Amusement Park.

In Zhang Ye's previous world, this amusement park had closed down several years ago. But in this world, the amusement park was still in operation. It was so packed with visitors that the sea of

people in front of them was blocking their view of where the ticketing office was located.

They lined up to buy the tickets.

After passing through security, they entered the park grounds.

Zhang Ye stretched his hand out. "Hold onto my hand."

Chenchen took his hand. "Where's the haunted house?"

"It should be somewhere up ahead." Zhang Ye wasn't in a great mood as it was very hot today. In the middle of summertime, he was wearing a surgical mask, hat, and aviators. If it were anyone else, who wouldn't feel hot?

When they reached the haunted house, they had to stand in line for almost an hour before they could get in.

The entrance was right in front and all the screams of the children could be heard coming from inside.

"Ah!"

"Mommy!"

"I don't wanna play here anymore!"

"That scared the crap out of me!"

"Sob sob sob!"

Some were even crying as screams rang out.

Zhang Ye looked at Chenchen and smiled. "You better not end up crying later."

Chenchen smirked. "Hur hur."

Then, Zhang Ye led her into the haunted house. It was also his first time visiting one.

After only eight steps in, a skeleton fell from above and dropped right in front of Zhang Ye and Chenchen. It was springing up and down in front of them.

Zhang Ye immediately got the goosebumps all over as his shouts nearly pierced the roof of the haunted house. "Aiyo, what the hell!"

Deadpan, Chenchen glanced at him. "Zhang Ye, are you sure you'll be OK?"

Zhang Ye shouted, "Quick, move along! Keep going!"

As someone who would even tremble in fear when he went to a hospital, how could he possibly enjoy this experience!

But just as they took a few steps forward, a figure with a protruding red tongue suddenly jumped out next to them and let out a chilling scream!

However, Zhang Ye screamed out even louder than him. "Holy shit!"

His scream nearly scared the employee dressed up as a demon out of his wits. Damn, Big Bro, is it really necessary for you to scream like that? You scared the shit out of me!

In comparison, Chenchen was pretty calm. She looked at that "demon" with a red tongue and pointed at him, saying, "This tongue doesn't look real at all. I could see straight away that this was made from cotton. And look at this." She pressed the red tongue and said, "It's so dirty. Just how many days have you not washed this tongue?"

The employee speechless.

Chenchen pointed out, "Next time, remember to use one that is made of rubber. It'd be more realistic than this."

The employee stayed speechless.

When they continued forward, there was yet another terrifying scene!

Something covered all in hair was striding step by step toward them!

Zhang Ye was frightened so badly that he kept screaming wildly.

But Chenchen just blinked her eyes and walked over to it. She pushed aside the disgusting-looking hair several times to reveal the shocked face of a female employee.

Chenchen nodded at her and said, "You're scarier than those people we met earlier on."

The female employee said, "Eh?"

Chenchen asked, "Is your pay higher than theirs?"

The female staff said nothing.

Chenchen: "How much do you get paid?"

The female staff still didn't respond.

After a trip through the haunted house, Zhang Ye's face had paled beyond white. He still couldn't get over it for the longest time after coming out and kept walking in places where the sun was shining, avoiding any place that was dark and shaded. It was not that he had no balls, but because he was just afraid of things that shocked and scared people.

But unknown to them, the staff in the haunted house were all feeling like they were going to vomit blood. They really had never seen a child like this before. She was clearly not brought up by a normal family. How did they know that? There was no need to ask this, of course. Have you fucking seen any normal child go and uncover a demon's hair and ask how much she was paid when they saw a ghost walking toward them? Have you witnessed something like this before?

Actually, Zhang Ye was also wondering how Chenchen could be so brave. She was too scared to sleep alone at night, but she was braver than anyone else once they were inside the haunted house. Even Zhang Ye nearly had his soul scared out of him, but this little kid could still find the time to mock the staff? Did you come all the way to the amusement park just to do that?

Zhang Ye asked, "Did you have fun?"

Chenchen nodded and said, "It's not too bad."

Zhang Ye said, "What do you mean by not too bad!"

Chenchen said, "Zhang Ye, you're such a weakling."

Zhang Ye said angrily, "Don't ask me to bring you out to this awful place again in the future!"

Chenchen said in a serious manner, "Don't you know that they're all just pretending?"

"Of course I know that!" Zhang Ye said angrily.

Chenchen let out a hur hur. "Zhang Ye, you're such a coward."

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes and harrumphed, "I'm a coward? You just haven't seen this bro pilot a plane! That's what you would call a big occasion. What do you know?"

Chenchen pouted and turned to look at a shop that was selling things. She pointed at the shop and said, "Zhang Ye, I want ice cream."

Zhang Ye nodded. "Keep dreaming."

"Go buy it for me."

"Buy it yourself."

"You buy it for me!"

When an old couple who had brought their grandson out to have fun saw this, they could not help but criticize Zhang Ye with a few choice words.

The old lady said, "Boy, if the child wants to eat, just go and buy it for her."

The old man said, "Since it's Children's Day and they only get to enjoy one such holiday, you should give into her."

The two of them walked away after that.

Zhang Ye was at a loss.

"Alright, alright, you're the king today." Zhang Ye forced himself to go and buy ice cream for her. "But let me say this first. After Children's Day, I won't go so easy on you!"

Chenchen ignored him and continued to eat the ice cream. She kept flicking her eyes around like she was scoping out what to do next.

All of a sudden, sounds of a festive atmosphere drifted over from up ahead. It seemed to be an event. A host was onstage talking at the moment. Several hundred people were around the stage!

It sounded like there was some sort of a singing contest?

And there were even prizes?

Chapter 1053: 'The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol'!

At the amusement park.

More and more people gathered around a stage set up on the southern side of the park.

The host was a young and pretty woman. Although she was not exceptionally beautiful, she still looked good nonetheless. From the way she spoke, she was definitely a professional broadcast host too. This was the occupation that Zhang Ye held. So, when faced with a fellow peer, he would know from feeling alone. Beaming, she raised her microphone and announced, "Good day to all the parents and children here today. I am the host of Central Radio Children's Channel, Yuan Meng. You can call me Little Yuan or Little Meng."

Some of the people in the crowd actually knew her.

"Ah, Yuan Meng?"

"Central Radio Children's Channel?"

"I know her!"

"Yeah, I always let my kid listen to her show!"

"I've only ever heard her voice in the past. I didn't think that Yuan Meng would look so pretty as well."

"What event are they holding here? Why is there a band and all those instruments?"

Everyone was very interested.

Yuan Meng smiled and said, "We're holding a live broadcast here for the June 1st Children's Day Special. The signal will be broadcast in-sync through our radio station." Looking at her watch, she said, "We'll be starting in about another 15 minutes"

time, so I hope everyone will cooperate and join the singing contest that we're holding here today. It can be the children taking part alone, or teamed up with their parents as a group. We have invited a professional band to play for today's event as well, and there are even three music teachers from the Central Conservatory of Music here to judge the contest. Every participating family will stand to win a prize, with the top three prizes even grander, so we hope everyone will participate enthusiastically."

The prizes were all placed behind her on the stage.

The three judges were also beckoning with their hands and calling for everyone to join.

"A singing contest?"

"There are even prizes to be given out?"

"Wow, it's going to be live radio broadcast?"

"Really? It will be broadcast live on Central Radio Children's Channel?"

Zhang Ye had a look at the equipment and the workers at the venue and knew immediately that this was truly a setup for a live broadcast. He used to work in a radio station, so of course he would know.

A lot of the children started to shout in excitement.

"It's Big Baby Bear!"

"Mom, I want that!"

"Dad, let's join the contest!"

"I wanna join too!"

"Alright, alright, let's participate!"

"Let's go and register!"

"We're going to register too!"

"Are we really going to be on a live radio show?"

"We can sing any song that we want? Then I'll join too!"

The parents and their children were all very enthusiastic.

But Zhang Ye was not really interested. He had already been on countless live television broadcasts, to say nothing of a live radio broadcast. Besides, if a channel like Central Radio Children's Channel wanted a celebrity like Zhang Ye to appear on their show, they would have to pay a fee for his appearance.

"Let's go," Zhang Ye called out to Chenchen.

But Chenchen did not move.

Zhang Ye turned around. "What's the matter?"

Chenchen raised her arm and pointed at the top prize on the stage. "Zhang Ye, I want that."

Zhang Ye said in annoyance, "Do you even know what the name of that thing is?"

Chenchen nodded. "I know. It's Big Baby Bear."

The prizes were quite good. The first place prize was a plushie of one of the characters in one of this world's children's cartoon. It was pretty big and even seemed like it was a limited edition collectible that couldn't be bought with money.

Zhang Ye wondered, "I thought you didn't like to watch cartoons anymore?"

Chenchen looked at the other children who were all grabbing their parents' arms like spoiled brats. A lot of them seemed like they wanted to win that limited edition Big Baby Bear.

Chenchen also tugged at Zhang Ye's arm. "Zhang Ye, I want that too."

Zhang Ye was amused and laughed, "What? You want it just because the other kids want it as well?"

Chenchen nodded. "Win it for me!"

Zhang Ye gave her a look. "You know how to sing?"

"I do."

"Really?"

"I just can't sing well."

"That means you don't know how!"

"...Oh. Do you know how?"

"Hur, do I know how? Why are you so funny? What do I not know! But what's so attractive about this contest? Do you know how much of an appearance fee I can command? If you want me to sing, you'd have to fork out at least a million or two. Would I have to be so desperate over just a lousy bear?"

Zhang Ye was not bragging in this case. He was really worth that much these days.

Zhang Ye tried to pull her away. "Let's leave."

Chenchen did not move. She stood there looking at a family beside her.

A little girl who looked about five years old was shamelessly making a scene in front her parents. "Daddy, Mommy, I want Big Bear! I want Big Bear!"

Her father smiled bitterly and said, "But Daddy and Mommy can't sing well."

The little girl was nearly crying. "I don't care, I want Big Bear!"

Her father gritted his teeth and said, "Alright, since my daughter has spoken, Daddy has to do it somehow. I'll go register!"

The little girl cheered, "Yay, Daddy's the best!" She even kissed her father on the cheek.

Her mother patted her husband's chest and covered her mouth as she laughed. "Don't embarrass yourself when you're up there."

The father thumped his chest and declared, "For our daughter, I

don't mind being embarrassed!"

Chenchen looked at them without blinking.

That little girl noticed Chenchen looking at her. She looked back curiously and said, "Big Sis, do you want Big Bear too? You can ask your daddy to join the contest." She pointed at Zhang Ye.

Chenchen said, "I don't have a daddy."

The little girl was surprised by this and said, "But everyone has a daddy."

Chenchen looked at her and expressionlessly said, "I don't have one."

When the girl's parents heard that, they quickly pulled their daughter back and hurriedly said to the man in sunglasses beside Chenchen, "Sorry about that, sir. You know how kids are. We're really sorry!"

Zhang Ye smiled. "It's fine."

The mother asked out of curiosity, "Her parents?"

Zhang Ye was silent for a moment, then whispered, "They've passed away."

The mother was taken aback and said, "Oh, look at me, why did I ask! I'm sorry!"

Chenchen did not say a word.

Zhang Ye looked into her eyes and when he thought about her situation, he suddenly felt very sorry and bad for her. He knelt down and said to Chenchen, "About that Big Bear, do you really want it?"

Chenchen nodded. "Uh-huh."

Zhang Ye snapped his fingers. "Alright." He then stood up and said, "Even if I have to risk everything, I'll definitely win Big Bear for you!"

Instantaneously, this fellow was eager to fight!

He seemed to change into a different person as he strode up to register for the contest!

A few minutes later.

The live broadcast began.

Yuan Meng stood onstage and announced, "Good day, everyone. You're listening to Central Radio Children's Channel. I'm your host, Yuan Meng. I'm currently out at Beijing Amusement Park, where we are holding a spectacular singing contest. Over here, we have 13 groups signing up for the event, and we will be starting..."

At the same time, the radio broadcast started.

...

Zhang Ye's parents' house.

His father was tidying up the room when he found an old radio.

He asked, "Do we have any batteries in the house? Triple-As."

His mother clicked her tongue. "Why are you fiddling with that?"

His father said, "I want to see if it's still working. Otherwise, I'm gonna throw it away."

He tried tuning into a few radio stations.

Then he said, "It's still in working condition."

His mother suddenly said, "Wait, that station earlier was Central Radio Children's Channel? Are they broadcasting live from Beijing Amusement Park? Didn't Little Ye bring Chenchen there? A singing contest?"

His father turned up the volume. "Let's have a listen! Do you think Little Ye and Chenchen will take part?"

His mother's lips curled upward. "With our son's terrible voice, what can he sing?"

...

At the venue.

The first family was already performing onstage.

"Little bunny, be good,

"Open the door.

"I will not, I will not // open the door."

This was a nursery rhyme that Zhang Ye had sung before on a radio broadcast, At that time, it received a resounding response and a lot of people learned how to sing it as well.

This family could only sing it rather averagely, but they received rapturous applause nonetheless!

Those three teachers from the Central Conservatory of Music also smiled and applauded them.

Then it was the second group's turn to perform.

Then the third.

The father of the little girl who spoke to Chenchen earlier was the seventh to go onstage. He was very nervous as his hands trembled while holding his microphone. After all, all those people who were taking part in the contest did not have any prior experience of being on a live radio broadcast, and every other group displayed a similar anxiety when it was their turn to go onstage.

The little girl shouted, "Daddy, I'm cheering for you! Daddy, go for it!"

When he heard his daughter's cheering, the father straightened up and raised his microphone to sing along with the band's accompaniment.

He sang very terribly.

He even went off-key.

But the little girl kept clapping and shouting, "Daddy, you're great!" She held her mother's hand and said, "Mommy, Daddy's really great!"

Her mother laughed and said, "Yes, your daddy is the best!"

Chenchen looked at the girl and her mother without saying a word.

Zhang Ye could not watch this any further, so he purposely patted Chenchen on her head and said, "It's my turn, haha. Watch me."

Chenchen looked at him. "Are you sure you can do it?"

Zhang Ye laughed loudly. "Just you watch, kiddo."

Yuan Meng looked into the crowd and said, "Let's welcome the eighth group onstage."

Zhang Ye pulled Chenchen to the position closest to the stage and left her there as he walked up to the stage with a big smile. When a lot of people in the audience saw him dressed in that outfit, they looked at him strangely. Who would cover themselves with a surgical mask and a large pair of sunglasses on a warm summer day like this?

Yuan Meng also gave him an additional once-over before passing the microphone to him.

The band asked him, "What will you be singing?"

Zhang Ye took off his surgical mask. "Just give me a beat and I'll be fine." He walked over to communicate some details with the few of them.

The band was actually not that professional to begin with, so they were rather confused when they heard his instructions.

What do you mean?

You're even thinking of singing an original?

Who do you think you are?

Chenchen looked at Zhang Ye up on stage.

Beside her, a small hand grabbed hold of her hand. "Is that your daddy?"

Chenchen turned her head and realized that it was the little girl from earlier. She answered, "No."

Some people were looking at the sunglasses-wearing young man on the stage.

"Eh?"

"What's the matter?"

"That guy looks so familiar!"

"Ah, you're right!"

The stage was prepared.

Zhang Ye stood there and thought back to when he didn't know how to sing. He cleared his throat and deliberately adjusted his voice away from The Clown's voice pattern. Then he saw Chenchen looking at him and started feeling a little sad. Chenchen, don't be sad. Your parents are no longer around, but don't you still have your aunt? Don't you still have me? I may not be your father, and neither do I know how to be a father, I really don't. But I can assure you of this: As long as you need me, I'll always be by your side!

Believe me!

I definitely will be!

So, please, cheer up!

The music started!

A folk music accompaniment started playing!

Zhang Ye raised his microphone and stunned everyone the moment he opened his mouth to sing .

"The sun winks at me." He looked and blinked several times at Chenchen!

"Birds are singing songs for me. I am a very hard-working and unclingly little genie." He pointed to his own chest.

Everyone was taken aback.

What?

What song was this?

An original? Did you write it yourself?

The host, Yuan Meng, was also dumbfounded!

Zhang Ye walked to the front of the stage and put his hand into a flower basket. From it, he picked out a flower.

"Don't ask me where I'm from.

"Or ask me where I am going.

"I want to pick the prettiest flower,

"To offer to my little princess!"

He stooped down and placed the flower in Chenchen's hair. He pulled Chenchen and led her up onto the stage as well. Then he bent down and, amazingly, lifted Chenchen up on his left shoulder with astonishing strength.

Chenchen was terrified!

Zhang Ye laughed and said in a loud voice, "Aiyo, I nearly forgot!

"The king sent me on mountain patrol.

"Through the mortal realm, let me take a stroll.

"Beating my drums.

"Sounding my gong.

"Life is full of the feel of rhythm.

"The king sent me on mountain patrol.

"To capture a monk as his dinner roll.

"This mountain stream is so sweet that I don't envy couples or immortals!"

And then, suddenly, the audience broke into cheering!

The children were getting excited!

The parents were also mesmerized from listening to the song!

It was really good!

The song was perfect!

The three judges were stunned!

The band was also dumbfounded!

Dammit, this is just a children's singing contest held for entertainment's sake. What's with this song of yours? Isn't this song too professionally written?

...

Back at home.

His mother said in surprise, "Hey, hey, hey. This voice?"

His father said in astonishment, "Is that our son's voice?"

His mother said, "Did he really bring Chenchen onstage?"

...

At a music production company.

A department manager was just listening to the radio as he had nothing much to do. Suddenly, when this song was played, another assistant manager and he were both stunned!

"This song?"

"Who's that?"

"It's not very well sung, but the song is..."

"Have you heard this before? What song is that?"

"I've not heard of it before. Could it be an original?"

...

At the venue.

Zhang Ye raised his microphone to Chenchen's mouth. He knew that Chenchen was a smart girl.

Chenchen looked at him, then opened her mouth awkwardly to say, "The sun winks at me. Birds are singing songs for me."

Zhang Ye took it from there and laughed, "I am a very hard-working and unclingly little genie.

"Don't ask me where I'm from.

"Or ask me where I am going.

"I want to pick the prettiest flower,

"To offer to my little princess!"

Then Zhang Ye plucked out another flower and swiftly put it into Chenchen's hair again!

Chenchen suddenly laughed.

She was laughing very happily.

This was the first time Zhang Ye had seen her laughing in such a way. It was really the first time that it happened!

When he saw that, his singing became even more enthusiastic. He was already singing and skipping around mischievously. That bobbing motion of his head was especially funny.

It was obviously very funny to watch, but the parents of that little girl from earlier could not laugh at all. They knew that the sunglasses-wearing young man was not the girl's father and that her real parents had already passed away. Their eyes reddened a little and they couldn't hold back their tears anymore!

It was quite touching to see!

But they felt a sense of admiration even more!

Zhang Ye, who had Chenchen bouncing up and down on his shoulder, was laughing and singing.

["The king sent me on mountain patrol.](#)

"Through the mortal realm, let me take a stroll."

Chenchen followed along and sang.

"Beating my drums.

"Sounding my gong.

"Life is full of the feel of rhythm.

"The king sent me on mountain patrol.

"To capture a monk as his dinner roll.

"This mountain stream is so sweet that I don't envy couples or immortals!"

Applause rang out!

Cheers were erupting from the audience!

This song had sent the atmosphere of the entire audience to its highest point!

This was not a children's song. At least, it was not like a nursery rhyme that was sung to children. The song carried a great meaning of the unconditional love between family members that even the adults could understand and be touched by it!

Chapter 1054: Rave reviews!

The song ended.

"Great!"

"Great singing!"

"It was so nice to listen to!"

"This song is so well-written!"

"How awesome!"

"Yeah, there is brilliant talent among the people!"

"A random parent who went up on stage is this amazing? I'm impressed!"

Everyone applauded loudly. Many of the children were also clapping with all their might!

Suddenly, someone who was staring intently at Zhang Ye's face shouted, "Damn, what do you mean by there is brilliant talent among the people? Is, isn't that goddamn Teacher Zhang Ye?"

"Ah, he really looks like him!"

"What do you mean he looks like him? It is him!"

"It really is Zhang Ye!"

"Holy shit, Zhang Ye is here!"

"What?! I was wondering how a normal parent could write a song!"

The audience erupted into shouting!

A lot of people in the amusement park rushed over upon hearing the news.

The host, Yuan Meng, was stunned. "Teacher Zhang?"

The band and music teachers from the Central Conservatory of Music were also shocked!

By now, Zhang Ye had taken off his aviators knowing that it was pointless to wear them. When the people saw that it was really him, screaming again came from the crowd.

"Zhang Ye has made an appearance here!"

"Quick, come and see!"

"Oh my god, I've finally seen Zhang Ye in person!"

"This is my first time seeing an A-lister!"

The stage was surrounded by a large crowd of people!

Yuan Meng was very happy as she did not expect that she would meet a big shot like Zhang Ye while doing an outdoor live broadcast show. This was like the pie in the sky falling down, and it would definitely pull up her show's listenership ratings. "Teacher Zhang Ye, would you like to say something to the live audience and radio listeners?"

Zhang Ye plucked Chenchen off his shoulders with a smile and patted her head. "Hai, I won't say anything much or delay everyone's time. I was just bringing this kid out to play today. Since she said that she wanted that first place prize, how could I say no? Even if I had to risk my life, I would still have to win it."

Yuan Meng asked, "What's the title of this song? How could it be so good?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "It's called 'The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol.' Hur hur, I've written it just for my king."

"You mean this girl is your king?" Yuan Meng looked at Chenchen with a smile.

Zhang Ye replied happily, "Yes."

Yuan Meng said, feeling a little moved, "You're so good to your daughter."

Zhang Ye waved it off and said, "Hai, all parents are the same."

Chenchen said, "Can you give me that Big Bear already?"

Embarrassed, Yuan Meng said, "But there are still four more groups to go."

Chenchen gave an "oh" in disappointment.

"Alright, please proceed with the contest." Zhang Ye led the child off the stage. The moment they left the stage, they were surrounded by a group of people asking for his autograph. As he couldn't reject them, he signed for them one by one.

Shortly afterwards, the contest finished.

After the three judges and the band had a round of discussion, the results of the top three were soon decided!

Zhang Ye had gotten first place!

It was not because of his fame or some preferential treatment. Anyone who heard that song would know that first place was definitely his. His song was really good and was even an original. Moreover, this was also his first time performing it in public, so who else should get first place if not him?

The prizes were given out after that.

Zhang Ye smiled as he received the prize and then stuffed it into Chenchen's arms. "Here, I won it."

Chenchen instantly grabbed the Big Bear, which was nearly as tall as her, into her arms.

At the moment, the little girl who had talked to her earlier was holding her parents' hands as she stared fixedly at the Big Bear in envy. She could not help but approach. "Big Sis, your daddy treats you real well."

Chenchen said helplessly, "I've already told you that he's not my daddy."

The little girl nodded, then gulped. "Then, then can I touch Big Bear for a little bit?"

Chenchen looked at her and then placed the Big Bear into her arms. "I'll give it to you."

The little girl exclaimed in surprise, "Ah? Really?"

Her parents quickly said, "No, no, that won't do!"

Chenchen said, "This is just a toy for little kids to play with. I don't play with such things, so you can have it."

Big Bear was so big that the little girl couldn't quite wrap her arms around it, so she fell the ground with a heavy thud. However, joy lit up on her face as she said, "Thank you, Big Sis! Thank you, Big Sis!"

Chenchen tugged at Zhang Ye's arm and said, "Zhang Ye, let's go."

Zhang Ye asked, "What do you want to do next?"

Chenchen pouted and said, "You've been recognized by others, so how can we still have fun with anything?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Alright, blame it on me. Let's go home then."

"Zhang Ye."

"What's the matter?"

"Sing that again."

"Yes, my king."

At the amusement park, several hundred people were taking pictures and recording videos of the young and old duo with their cell phones. The adult was holding the child's hand as they left the amusement park, singing as they walked out of the place.

"The king sent me on mountain patrol!

"To capture a monk as his dinner roll!

"This mountain stream is so sweet that I don't envy couples or immortals!"

...

On Weibo.

There was a heated discussion happening!

An article on Weibo titled "Zhang Ye's surprise appearance at the Central Radio Children's Channel live broadcast event" immediately started trending and the song played on the radio was posted as well.

Numerous netizens also posted threads on Weibo and shared their pictures from the event.

"I got Zhang Ye's autograph!"

"Come and see! We bumped into Teacher Zhang at Beijing Amusement Park!"

"Video clip of Zhang Ye's singing on stage! Come quick!"

Picture after picture!

Video after video!

This song titled "The King Sent Me to Mountain Patrol" was trending all over Weibo!

"It's so incredible!"

"Zhang Ye is indeed Zhang Ye!"

"Haha, Teacher Zhang released a new song?"

"Why didn't he distribute the song over the Internet or through publishers? There weren't any promotions either? He just went up onstage to sing after chancing upon a minor singing contest? Isn't this a little too carefree? Uh, why do I seem to think that the fellow wrote that song on the spot?"

"Since when did Zhang Ye have a kid?"

"That little girl is a relative of his or the child of his friend, right? I know who she is."

"I know her too. That little girl previously led a group of her classmates and cracked the largest burglary case that startled the nation!"

"That's right, it's her!"

"Pfft, I remember too now!"

"I wonder why her parents are not with her, but it seems that Zhang Ye occasionally takes care of her and sometimes takes her to and from school. He has also attended her school's parent-teacher meetings. That was reported on the news before."

"This song is really funny, hahaha!"

"I don't think it's funny. I find it very touching instead."

"Me too! I was really touched by the song!"

"The person I respect the most in the entertainment industry is Zhang Ye. Although the fellow is always insulting people, picking fights, starting trouble, and constantly kicking up a fuss, I believe that everyone in the entertainment industry isn't what they seem like on the surface, except for Zhang Ye. I really believe that to be true. He is truly a good person who wouldn't hesitate to speak up about right and wrong."

"My son also listened to that song and he really likes it!"

"It's Children's Day today. I must give a Like to Zhang Ye!"

"Yes, Teacher Zhang Ye is a very good person."

"Yeah, he treats kids really well."

"Even though she's not his own daughter, he still treats her so well and specially wrote a song to make her happy. My impression of Zhang Ye has changed now, and I'll try my best not to criticize him in the future."

"It's so full of positive energy!"

"It's so full of Teacher Zhang's spirit!"

"This song is really amazing!"

The remarks online were all positive!

The netizens were all giving rave reviews to Zhang Ye and his song!

It was probably due to the alignment of many factors, but "The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol" had incredibly squeezed into the Top Chinese Music Chart within just two short hours!

It was placed at #7 on the daily chart!

It even pushed one of Sunset Glow's songs down the rankings!

And the numbers kept increasing with more and more people listening to it!

With the Children's Day festivities in full swing, this song became popular very quickly!

#6...

#5...

#4...

A dark horse emerged and appeared against all odds on the Top Chinese Music Chart that had been mainly occupied by songs from King of Masked Singers for the past few weeks!

Many of the industry insiders were dumbfounded by what they saw!

However, most of them were already used to it. This was Zhang Ye, and one would never be able to measure him through common sense. Even if everyone thought that something was impossible or would not do well, when it got handled by Zhang Ye, he would complete it with earth-shattering results. There was no logic in how he did things and no amount of logic could be used to explain it!

For a time.

This song was heard all over the streets and on the radio stations!

It was so catchy that some people even learned how to sing it after just listening to it three or four times!

...

In a neighborhood.

"Daddy, hurry up and learn this song!"

"But Daddy doesn't know how to sing."

"I don't care! You must learn it!"

"But why?"

"Because I'm going to be your king!"

"Hahaha, alright, alright. Daddy will learn it just for you!"

...

People in the entertainment circle also started talking about it.

Zhang Xia posted on Weibo, "Recommending a song to everyone. 'The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol' is a really nice song to listen to."

Chen Guang replied to her post below: "Grandma Zhang has already listened to the song? Haha, I've also just finished listening to it. It is indeed quite good. I only just found out that Director Zhang can even write songs of this genre. He's impressed me again. But Director Zhang's singing is still as terrible and he can't control his breathing that well. I've got to give him some pointers soon!"

Xiaodong: "@ZhangYe Teacher Zhang, can you seriously practice your singing to become better? Although, the song's really good and I found it quite enjoyable. If I were to cover it, please don't charge me a copyright fee!"

Fan Wenli: "'The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol' is already #3 on the Top Chinese Music Chart! Congratulations, Director Zhang!"

Dong Shanshan: "What a nice song!"

Amy: "Teacher Zhang, you're amazing! Please write a song for us again!"

This song also received rave reviews from the industry!

Of course, quite a few people also ridiculed Zhang Ye's singing. Be it "A Letter to Home" or "The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol," these two songs were the only times Zhang Ye used his true identity to perform in public. They all felt that Zhang Ye's performance had no singing skill to speak of at all!

When the people saw that, they were also amused.

"Haha, his singing is really a little terrible!"

"So Teacher Zhang also has his shortcomings!"

"It's just a children's song. What singing skills are needed!"

"It's not like Teacher Zhang's a professional singer. Not going off-key is already pretty good!"

"Eh, I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"Do you guys think that those songs sung by The Clown on King of Masked Singers were written by Teacher Zhang Ye? If not, where could he have gotten so many originals?"

"That might be possible!"

"Right, that's really a possibility!"

Soon after, Zhang Ye's Weibo was updated.

He posted: "Thank you, everyone. Thank you to all my friends and fellow peers for your support. This song was only meant to cheer up the children. I did not expect that it would cause such a big commotion. It was really unexpected that the song could even get to #3 on the Top Chinese Music Chart. You all have given me such a shock, haha. Anyway, I will use this song to wish all the

children in our country a happy Children's Day!"

Chapter 1055: King of Masked Singers gets investigated!

Noon.

At home.

Zhang Ye scarfed down his meal.

Chenchen had finished lunch much earlier and was playing "The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol" on her cell phone. She went over to Zhang Ye's mother and held the phone out in front of her. "Grandma, Zhang Ye wrote this song for me."

His mother patted her head and smiled. "It's such a nice song."

Chenchen turned around. "Grandpa, Zhang Ye wrote this song for me."

His father nodded enthusiastically. "It's great. Granny and I both listened to it on the radio just now."

Chenchen said, "You can hear me singing in it as well."

His mother smiled. "You sang much better than Little Ye!"

Chenchen nodded. "Yup."

Zhang Ye was rolling his eyes at everything they said. "Don't you guys feel bad making such lies?"

His mother shot him a look. "With that lousy voice of yours, how can you be better at singing than our Chenchen?!"

Zhang Ye threw up his hands. "Alright, but can I eat in peace?"

"What place is it at now?" his father asked.

"You mean on the Top Chinese Music Chart?" Zhang Ye laughed and answered, "I think it's almost reached second."

His mother said in astonishment, "How many hours has it been?"

Zhang Ye analyzed, "It's Children's Day today, so the momentum

from that is pushing it up. I think it shouldn't be a problem for it to get first place by tonight, but I doubt that it can muster up a fight in the monthly chart's top rankings. The fifth episode of King of Masked Singers will be broadcast in another few days. At that point, there will be another flurry of songs released."

However, that was already good enough. The drop in his popularity after so many days without being in the public eye had been turned around a little bit.

A phone rang.

It was Chenchen's cell phone.

Chenchen answered her phone. "Aunt."

Rao Aimin: "Did Zhang Ye take you out to play?"

Chenchen said: "We went to Beijing Amusement Park and even sang a song together."

Rao Aimin: "Did you enjoy yourself then?"

Chenchen said: "I guess it was alright."

Zhang Ye interjected: "Only alright?"

Chenchen handed her cell phone to him. "Zhang Ye, my aunt is looking for you."

"OK." Zhang Ye took the phone from her and said: "Sorry to have inconvenienced you, Old Rao. Have you accepted the award yet?"

It sounded rather chaotic on Rao Aimin's end, so she was probably outside somewhere. "It's been withdrawn."

Zhang Ye said: "Ah?"

"I don't know what's with this bunch of bastards. They withdrew your award at the last minute and changed the recipient to someone else. It seems like they received some instructions from above or something."

A man's voice sounded over the phone: "Hey, why are you

swearing at us?"

Zhang Ye heard Rao Aimin say: "What's wrong with me swearing at you people? You made me come all the way here to accept the award, then changed the recipient to someone else on the spot? You people might have nothing better to do, but I have many things to handle on my end!"

When the man heard this, he felt a little guilty. "Big Sis, why is your temper even more terrible than Zhang Ye's?"

Zhang Ye's and Rao Aimin's temperament were very similar. The two of them always did as they liked and would scold others the moment they disagreed with something.

Zhang Ye said: "Calm down, cool your jets. It's fine. If they've withdrawn the prize, so be it. Come back quick. The kid's waiting for you."

Rao Aimin said: "Alright, I'll head back soon. But let me give them another piece of my mind first!"

Just before the call ended, Zhang Ye heard Rao Aimin say: "Call your organizer's manager out! Are you people taking us for fools?"

The award was not actually an important one, but neither was it pointless. It was still considered an officially recognized award in the Beijing municipality called the "Lifetime Contribution Award to Variety Shows." With King of Masked Singers becoming so popular, Beijing Television had fought hard to get this award for Zhang Ye. As the value attached to this award was not really that great, Zhang Ye had sent his agent to collect the prize on his behalf. However, he did not expect it to be withdrawn at the last minute like this. Based on his time in the entertainment circle, Zhang Ye knew that there was something behind this decision. Perhaps this was done to send a signal of some sort.

Sure enough, it happened.

A few minutes later, there was a sudden change in the Top

Chinese Music Chart!

"The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol" was removed and its popularity score was locked. Even though the netizens could still access the song from various channels, the popularity score of the song would no longer increase. It had disappeared from the chart completely.

A lot of people on Weibo were stunned by the development.

"What happened?"

"Why is 'The King' no longer on the charts?"

"Did its popularity ranking drop all of a sudden?"

"That can't be! It was in second place! And almost in first place! It can't possibly just drop off from second place to outside the top hundred spots!"

"I've tried searching for it, but 'The King' is no longer in the top hundred!"

"What the hell? What's with this turn of events?"

"Was there a mistake with the statistics calculations?"

"What happened? Can anyone explain this?"

"Comrades, I've just received news that there was supposed to be an official award presented today in Beijing called the 'Lifetime Contribution Award to Variety Shows.' Teacher Zhang was slated to receive it, but just a moment ago, the recipient was switched to someone else. It seems like they received notice from the Ministry of Culture to prevent the award from being given to Teacher Zhang, and his agent even got into an argument with the organizers."

"This..."

"A ban?"

"The smog issue still hasn't blown over yet?"

"What was supposed to happen still couldn't be avoided, huh?"

"Dammit!"

"Would King of Masked Singers be affected by this then?"

"Who knows!"

"Teacher Zhang is in the news again!"

"The Brain Gold commercial has been taken down as well!"

"What?"

"I have a friend working at a television station and I just got notified about that!"

"But why?"

"No reason was given. There was just an order to change the commercial and redo it. The meaning couldn't be simpler! It just means that Zhang Ye's scene in the commercial has to be cut!"

"'A Letter to Home' has disappeared from the Top Chinese Music Chart as well!"

"Damn, those are both good songs!"

"It's not an issue with the song. It was clearly taken down because of the singer!"

The bad news kept coming.

At home, Zhang Ye's phone was blowing up!

His mother said in shock, "Why are they suddenly targeting you?"

Zhang Ye said calmly, "This should have happened much earlier, but it just got delayed."

His mother said angrily, "How can you be this calm?"

"I was long prepared for this," Zhang Ye replied.

Yes, he already knew about this long ago as Wu Zeqing had warned him about it.

All this time, all these days, Zhang Ye was being soft banned. Although there was no official statement about his status from any agencies, the truth was that Zhang Ye had already been banned for about a month or two. But due to the controversy at that time and the topic still being fervently discussed in the public sphere, this matter was not explicitly picked on during that sensitive period. If Zhang Ye had continued maintaining a low profile, this problem should have blown over in another month or two with Old Wu around. That would have been the end of the issue and Zhang Ye would have been able to stand up anew to do whatever he wanted to do. But today, Zhang Ye, who had been quiet for over a month, had come out with a new work. It even managed to shoot up to the top of the Top Chinese Music Chart at the double with momentum that was a force to be reckoned with. This was what attracted the current response from the authorities.

Ring, ring, ring.

The Clown's cell phone rang.

Han Qi spoke in a flustered tone: "Teacher, can you make a trip down to the television station now?"

Zhang Ye disguised his voice and said: "Did something happen?"

Han Qi said: "An executive from the Beijing Ministry of Culture and directors of some associations came for an inspection, so Director Hu got me to contact you. The other contestants are also on their way over now."

Zhang Ye acknowledged: "I'll be right there."

...

At Beijing Television.

In a meeting room.

Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, and Flowing Time, along with two other replacement masked singers, were present. They were all wearing their masks and seated in the meeting room when The

Clown finally arrived.

Before long, Hu Fei also came into the meeting room with a group of people trailing behind him. They came in one by one until a dozen or so people in suits were inside the room. Finally, a deputy station head of Beijing Television who accompanied them throughout also arrived.

Hu Fei said, "Let me introduce all of you."

There was an honorary chairman from a television association.

There was a director from a certain cultural institution.

There were some enforcement officials from the Beijing Ministry of Culture.

Then, one of the leaders of the delegation smiled and said, "I'm very honored today to meet all of the show's contestants. This show you're doing is fantastic and I love watching it as well. However, there are some problems that I have to point out regarding some of the contestants' choice of song. I find them a little negative and not exactly helping to spread positive energy to the audience. Since this show has become so popular all over the country with over tens of millions of people watching the show, we have to pay more attention to what goes on it. The management of the SARFT is already preparing a censorship control system regarding song titles, as well as drama series and film titles. In the future, we'll all be following this system to carry out our enforcement of the rules. I think this is a good thing as there really is a necessity to make the censorship control system stricter. This is a kind of respect for our culture, as well as a guiding our citizens down the correct path."

He rattled on and talked about many things.

After that, the group of people moved off and continued with their inspection.

The deputy station head went with them while Hu Fei, Hou Ge,

Xiao Lu, and the others stayed behind.

Flowing Time asked, "Director Hu, what's the meaning of this?"

A new replacement masked singer said, "We don't even have the freedom to choose what we want to sing anymore?"

Sunset Glow added, "If we're talking about songs with positive energy, how many love songs would be considered positive? Aren't they unnecessarily limiting a great deal of songs that we can sing? We won't even be able to sing love songs from now on?"

Hu Fei fluttered his hands. "It's not that bad. Everyone, just pay a bit more attention to your choice of songs for this episode and everything will be fine. Don't choose something like what Li Yu chose and everything should work out."

Petal Shower said, "We won't even be able to sing children's songs now, much less love songs."

Flowing Time agreed and said, "Zhang Ye's song has already been taken off the Top Chinese Music Chart."

Hou Ge said, "That was strictly targeted at Director Zhang, not you guys."

Petal Shower gave him a look. "Those people from the Beijing Ministry of Culture and the associations are probably here for Zhang Ye as well, aren't they?"

Hu Fei sighed.

Flowing Time asked, "Was this move initiated by the SARFT?"

Hu Fei answered, "It's not the SARFT this time."

Flowing Time heaved a sigh of relief. "That's not so bad then."

One of the replacement masked singers said curiously, "Why isn't the SARFT leading the crackdown this time? In the past, banning artists and program censorship have always been the SARFT's business, hasn't it?"

Hu Fei thought about it, then shook his head. "We're not sure about that either. Whatever it is, everyone should just take note of this matter. It's Children's Day anyway, so it might not be a bad idea to sing some children's songs for this episode."

Children's songs?

The contestants looked at each other.

Meanwhile, The Clown sat there, having not said a word since the beginning of the meeting.

He did not know what to say at all. He wanted to apologize but was unable to say that. This entire affair started because of him as he had offended too many people the previous time. This was why even though Wu Zeqing was holding down the fort over at the SARFT and they did not come to trouble him, there were still other departments and their leaders trying to prevent Zhang Ye from rising again!

This was all very logical.

This was all within his expectations.

No matter how he thought about it, everything pointed to this outcome. Zhang Ye himself knew this too. Although Zhang Ye looked very calm and was not exactly bursting with emotion, this thought he was holding inside him made him feel quite disappointed and exhausted!

Chapter 1056: The Clown sings a children's song?

Friday.

On the day of recording.

Since morning, a lot of unverified news appeared all over the Internet.

"Zhang Ye faces yet another ban!"

"The King of Masked Singers program team gets investigated!"

"King of Masked Singers to stop broadcasting soon?"

"With the introduction of new regulations, all songs in violation will be banned!"

"King of Masked Singers in an awkward position!"

"Guidance and suggestions from the Ministry of Culture to variety singing sings: Promote positive energy and boycott pessimistic and negative musical pieces."

"The SARFT yet to make a statement!"

The netizens were getting very anxious.

"Are they really going to stop the broadcast?"

"Impossible. This must be fake news."

"They can't stop such a large show just like that!"

"But there's no doubt that King of Masked Singers has been implicated in a sticky situation!"

"I heard that the contestants were called up individually for talks!"

"Have you seen Li Yu's Weibo yet? He had sung about his mother telling him of the hopelessness of life, and then there's that 'I Really Hate You.' Now though, he has to step forward to make an

apology and even declare that he is fully supportive of the authorities' guidance and suggestions and that all his works from now on will contain positivity."

"This Old Li! He's so spineless!"

"He has no other choice since the general environment's like this."

"I wonder if King of Masked Singers can carry on recording as usual today!"

"Yeah, the contestants might be greatly affected by this!"

"The Clown seems to have been called out and criticized as well!"

"Petal Shower and Sunset Glow were called out and criticized too. They've also performed love songs onstage that seem to have crossed the regulations' line."

"What the heck are they trying to do!"

For the past two days, this matter was constantly being discussed online. Everyone was worried that King of Masked Singers would really be taken off the air.

...

Later that morning.

At Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery.

Han Qi was already calling him for the third time.

"Teacher Clown, you're still not here yet?"

"I have something to do, so I'll be running a little late."

"I've already drawn the lots on your behalf. You'll be the sixth contestant to go onstage today."

"OK, thank you."

"Th-Then, please hurry and don't be too late."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye, dressed all in black, found his way

and walked forward.

For some reason, when he woke up this morning, Zhang Ye suddenly thought of coming here to chat with Old Wei. He did not know why; he just wanted to come.

There were some reporters and cameras in front.

Zhang Ye immediately recognized them to be employees from the Central TV News Channel as he had met the host once before. When he saw them, Zhang Ye did not go over but stood in a distant, inconspicuous corner.

Other than the portrait of the deceased and the birthday on Old Wei's tombstone, a line inscribed on it: "When some people live, they are already dead. / When some people die, they are still alive." This was from the poem Zhang Ye had recited at Father Wei's funeral. After Old Wei passed, this line served as an epitaph inscribed on his tombstone to accompany him on his journey of eternal sleep.

Besides the reporters and cameras stationed around the tombstone, 20 to 30 students were standing there.

"Father!"

"Father Wei!"

"Sob, we miss you!"

"Father Wei, we're doing very well right now. You don't need to worry about us anymore. My second mock exam results were very good. The teacher said that I would definitely qualify for Peking University. I'll be taking the college entrance examination in a few days' time and I'll definitely work hard to do well. By the way, Tongtong has already been assured of a place in a university. He was your favorite back then and he did not disappoint you at all!"

"Father, please come back to us!"

"We really miss you so much!"

Some of them were crying out to the tombstone, while the others did not speak at all and just covered their mouths as they cried.

It was Old Wei's birthday today and the children brought many things to pay their respects to him.

When the Central TV News reporter heard what the children said, she quietly turned around to wipe away her tears. "...With that, we have come to the end of our report here."

They finished packing their equipment.

The television station staff left and were gradually followed by the children.

Zhang Ye, who was still standing far away, decided to slowly make his way over at this time. Standing in front of the tombstone, he smiled and said, "Old friend, I'm here to see you. How are you doing?" Then he sat down and smiled at the tombstone. "I did not bring anything with me today, but I guess there's no need for it either, really. Just look, so many of your children have been thinking of you, and so many people miss you. With them bringing you so many offerings and things, you must definitely be living a good life on the other side."

The cemetery was quite peaceful.

Zhang Ye was the only one around and he muttered to himself.

"I really envy you, really. Haha, you don't know how popular you've become. You're respected by many and your name has been immortalized for the ages. But I know that you definitely do not care about that because you're different from me in that you don't covet riches or fame. Look at me now. I have it far worse than you. There are people criticizing me every day, with some wanting to censor me and others trying to step on me. By the way, this bro has been banned yet again. Even when I sang a children's song, people were whispering and pointing their fingers at me.

"I've been shrouded in an especially bad aura these past two days.

I'm not afraid that you'll laugh at me, so can you tell me what I'm slogging so much for? Hur hur, I don't even know what I'm doing all this for anymore! You must be enjoying yourself since there's definitely no air pollution in Heaven. Oh yeah, there probably aren't traffic jams either? You can cause as much trouble as you like in such a vast place. How wonderful would that be? But just look at where I am. Before I even rise up, my head is struck. Any little thing that I do, people nitpick and tell me what to do. Do you think this is interesting? It's way too fucking uninteresting! But I still have to continue moving forward. I'm not as carefree as you, leaving just like that without even saying goodbye to me.

"Old Wei, do you think I'm a huge failure? Everyone says that I'm successful, but why don't I feel that way? Please don't find me annoying, Old Wei. I'm only able to say these words to you. I'll feel better when I let everything out. Then I'll have to go and perform after this!"

Ring ring ring. His cell phone rang again.

Han Qi was calling again.

Zhang Ye did not take the call. He waved the cell phone at the tombstone and said with a smile, "See? Everything is about work, and they're hounding me again. Alright, I've said enough to you. I'll come back to see you again when I'm free. Oh yes, don't worry about your daughter, Wei Ying. She's doing quite fine and has gotten quite a good job as well. I've given her my number, so if there's anything she needs help with, I'll definitely help her out. With me around, you can rest assured."

He stood up.

Zhang Ye was about to walk off, but he suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned back for a last glance. "I'm leaving now."

...

At Beijing Television.

In the King of Masked Singers' recording studio.

Recording had long since begun and four contestants had already finished performing.

Onstage, Flowing Time was currently singing.

"The king sent me on mountain patrol!

"To capture a monk as his dinner roll!"

He was performing Zhang Ye's song that had gotten really popular over the past few days.

Hu Fei said anxiously, "Is The Clown still not here?"

Hou Ge looked at Han Qi. "What's going on?"

Han Qi also said anxiously, "He should be here soon, he should be here soon!"

"It's gonna be his turn next." Hu Fei said, "Pester him a bit more."

When Han Qi was just about to make the call, an employee rushed over from elsewhere and said, "The Clown is here and is waiting in the waiting area. We can continue to record normally!"

Hu Fei nodded. "Great!"

Han Qi heaved a sigh of relief. The Clown had been a very punctual and polite person and had never been late before. So she was unsure as to what was going on with The Clown today.

Could it be that the investigation had left him unsure about what song he should sing?

Anyway, what was The Clown's first song going to be today?

Han Qi immediately checked the title of the song. When she saw it, she was a little stunned.

Eh?

This title is a children's song?

It was going to be another children's song?

Three contestants had already sung a children's song today!

Han Qi suddenly felt a little disappointed and helpless!

Chapter 1057: 'I'm a Small, Little Bird'!

In the studio.

Flowing Time's performance ended.

The audience gave an enthusiastic round of applause, but the discussions weren't as enthusiastic as they looked on the surface.

"Great song."

"Yeah, it sounded good."

"But I feel that something's missing!"

"All the songs are children's songs today!"

"Yeah, we already heard three such songs. The new replacement masked singer sang the first one, followed by Sunset Glow, and then Flowing Time. The other replacement masked singer's song added an excerpt of a children's song to the end of his performance as well, except that he slightly arranged the melody. That was the only hint of creativity I saw today. Even though it was very enjoyable to listen to, this is too much. It's good that there's positive energy, but isn't this too goddamn positive, don't you think?"

"What can they do other than this? The contestants have been called out individually and criticized!"

"Not only on King of Masked Singers. It's the same story for other singing shows."

"Hai, is there not a single contestant with the backbone to stand against it?"

"Who'd wanna step forward? They'd just be sticking their necks out if they did that!"

"Do you think everyone is like Zhang Ye?"

"Speaking of Teacher Zhang, I'm really starting to miss him. If

Teacher Zhang were here competing, he would surely be wonderful to watch. He definitely wouldn't be afraid of the Ministry of Culture or some television association!"

"Haha, that's right. That's just how Zhang Ye is!"

"That's totally spot on. Sometimes, I criticize Zhang Ye too. But having not seen him for some time now, it feels like I'm missing a part of myself. Do you guys think I'm insane?"

"Sucks that Zhang Ye isn't taking part."

"Teacher Zhang has been thoroughly banned. Who knows how long it'll be before he can make a comeback."

"Hai, showbiz without Zhang Ye is as good as boring!"

"It's The Clown turn now!"

"He's the last one to perform in this first round!"

"Let's see what he's gonna sing."

Dong Shanshan's voice reverberated, "Let's welcome the final contestant—The Clown."

The audience erupted into applause. Everyone still had great expectations for The Clown.

The Clown went onstage.

The title of the song was displayed on the teleprompter screen at this moment.

"I'm a Small, Little Bird"?

When the audience saw this, they were left speechless.

"Hell."

"It's another children's song?"

"A small, little bird? This is definitely a children's song!"

"I'm sick of listening to them!"

"Can they not sing children's songs anymore? Please!"

"Why did those people from the television association have to butt in and cause all this trouble! A proper singing show has been forced to this state? These singers too. Why isn't there anyone with some backbone?"

"How weak!"

"Yeah, will no one step up and shout back?"

"This is actually pretty good. You guys just haven't seen how the other singing shows reacted. The songs on those other shows are basically all the same."

"Hai. Even today Zhang Ye is remembered. He who refused to return to Jiangdong !"

Backstage.

The contestants who had finished performing were all seated in the tearoom.

Flowing Time, who had just returned from the stage, glanced at the television but did not say anything.

A new replacement masked singer said, "The Clown is also singing a children's song?"

"' [I'm a Small, Little Bird](#) '?" Sunset Glow blinked.

Petal Shower sulked, "What can we sing other than children's songs? It's the safest choice we have!"

The other replacement masked singer sighed. "We're the focus of attention right now, so it's best that we take the necessary precautions."

At the panel.

The judges were also giving each other looks.

Another children's song?

Hai.

Chen Guang smiled wryly.

Zhang Xia and Amy wore neutral expressions.

Even they were finding today's episode pointless.

The lights dimmed.

The music started playing.

Some of the audience members had lost concentration and had let their minds wander off after they saw the title of the song.

Without warning, The Clown began singing. With him singing, a lot of people froze on the spot and were taken by surprise!

"There are times I feel like I'm a small, li'l bird.

"I wanna fly,

"but no matter how I can't fly high."

Everyone was stunned!

It wasn't a children's song!

Holy shit!

This was not a children's song!

It was a fucking rock song!

In the tearoom, the look in Petal Shower's eyes shifted!

Flowing Time's eyes widened in shock!

This song...

These lyrics...

The audience perked up in an instant!

The Clown's eyes held gloom and despair.

"Perhaps I'll one day perch on the branches, "Yet the hunters I've incurred.

"Only when I flew into the blue sky did I discover that I had nothing upon which to rely."

What to do when born under evil stars; Before I could even rise,

I was beaten unwise.

A worn-out hat covering my face,

I cross the busy marketplace.

In a old ship laden with wine jars—

[floating down the brine.](#)

He was really annoyed!

He was downright disappointed!

The Clown's voice trembled. "Every time the dead of night arrives, I can never fall asleep."

He pointed at his chest and thumped it. "Is it only my tomorrows that won't ever get better, is that my keep?

"What's the future hold?

"Exactly who could know?

"Whether happiness is just a legend, "I'm forever unable to find and show."

Chen Guang was gnashing his teeth listening to the song!

Yao Jiancai was stunned!

Amy was also deeply shocked by the few lines The Clown had sung. She didn't even notice that her mouth was hanging agape in an inelegant manner. She just kept listening while looking like that!

The Clown suddenly sang louder.

"I'm just a small, small, little bird!

"I wanna fly and soar, but I just can't fly high!

"I'm searching and finding, looking for and seeking a warm bosom in which to lie!

"Does this request seem too hard to apply?"

Many in the audience suddenly stood up!

"This is so great!"

"Oh my god!"

"The Clown! The Clown!"

The audience was getting extremely excited!

In the tearoom, the other contestants were surprised by this!

Flowing Time said, "He's really willing to sing something like that?"

Even a fool could tell that other than the title of the song resembling a children's song, the rest of it had nothing to do with being a children's song!

The Clown closed his eyes.

"All you who know my name, you doing well, by the by?"

"The world's such a small place.

"We're destined to have no escape, no space.

"When I've had my fill of fickle feelings, "When you decide to fight for your ideals, "The pressures of living and the dignity of life, which has more appeal?"

To me, the most important thing is dignity!

To me, it's even more important than life itself!

But I've already given my best!

I've really given my very best!

I don't ask for much. All I want is to work in peace, to find a place that suits me and accepts me for me. But why can't I find it? Why have I been unable to find such a place in all this time?

Is it really that difficult?

Is this request really so difficult to fulfill?

Han Qi was in tears listening. It was as though The Clown's song contained some sort of spell that made her tears flood down her face. She did not know who The Clown was, nor did she know what The Clown's story was. But she was sure that it was a story full of sadness, anger, and loneliness!

Teacher Clown.

Just who are you?

How much have you gone through to be able to sing a song like this!

The Clown suddenly jumped an octave.

Was he lost?

Or was it a cry for help?

Maybe he was asking this world a question?

"I'm just a small, small, little bird!

"I wanna fly and soar!

"But I just can't fly high!

"I'm searching and finding! Looking for and seeking! A warm bosom in which to lie!

"Does this request seem too hard to apply?"

The Clown laughed at himself. Then his voice softened as he conveyed his disappointment at the industry. He sang like he was asking the world a question, "Does this request. Seem too hard. To apply?"

This is from the first half of a poem by Lu Xun, titled 'Self-Mockery.' Lu Xun speaks of being born in the wrong times as he was suppressed, i.e. during the struggle between the Communist and Nationalist governments. It was a time when the rich held power while the poor suffered, and he was caught between these two classes of people. He laments about being aware of these

problems, yet was unable to do much or help out for fear of being singled out by either side of the classes.

Chapter 1058: For dignity!

Did this request seem too hard to apply?

Petal Shower fell silent!

Sunset Glow fell silent!

The judges fell silent as well!

After he finished performing, The Clown took a deep breath and bowed to the audience. Then he turned around and calmed himself. Feelings of disappointment and anger were written all over his back!

The audience roared!

Based on what they saw and heard, The Clown's song and his singing weren't even good. The song did not have any showy high notes or any portamento techniques. He did not even care about his stage presence or the atmosphere and just quietly stood there singing, telling a story, a story about himself.

The sheer power of the song was immense!

It resonated deeply with the crowd!

"I'm a Small, Little Bird."

Some of the audience members started crying when they thought of their experiences!

Some others clenched their fists angrily when they recalled their past!

The studio erupted into thunderous applause!

"He's so cool!"

"The Clown is so cool!"

"It's really good! He sang really well!"

"I don't know how to describe it!"

"Someone really stepped forward!"

"Damn, who was saying earlier that this was a children's song? Come out! I promise that I won't beat you up!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

A lot of people started chanting his stage name, soon joining in unison!

Dong Shanshan walked onto the stage and looked deep into The Clown's eyes before announcing, "Let's welcome Flowing Time back to the stage. Next is the voting."

Flowing Time gave a bitter laugh!

Why the fuck is it me again?

Why am I always being placed next to him in such critical moments during a battle?

Flowing Time really did not wish to go up on stage as he knew that it would be meaningless whether he went up or not. In this first round of performances, it was impossible for Flowing Time to beat The Clown no matter what. Even he himself did not have any hopes of winning. In fact, he had also been moved by the song, but he concealed it very well and did not let show his eyes it. For a slight moment, he was very impressed with the song. He was not impressed by The Clown's singing but by the person who wrote it.

Yao Jiancai could not wait to speak. "I'll leave the professional comments to the other teachers since I can't make any professional judgments when it comes to music. But I want to give my vote to The Clown. It definitely has to be him!"

Chen Guang said, "I'm voting for The Clown."

Zhang Xia: "The Clown."

Amy: "The Clown."

Wang Zhuishu: "The Clown."

Chen Yidong: "I'll vote for The Clown too."

The judges did not say more than what was necessary as they were at a critical juncture where the relevant associations were conducting a large scale boycott of negative and pessimistic music pieces. They couldn't say anything at all since no matter what evaluation they gave, it would still be seen as wrong. This was because "I'm a Small, Little Bird" was a song full of negative energy. There was not a trace of positivity in it! However, they did not try to avoid the matter and used the most straightforward way to express their opinions!

They just gave their votes to The Clown!

They gave no reason for their choice!

The audience voting began and ended very quickly.

The Clown: 422 votes!

Flowing Time: 78 votes!

The Clown won!

...

Offstage.

Hou Ge said with a wry smile, "Brother Hu, when The Clown submitted the song, it was without any lyrics. We still thought that this would be a children's song and didn't think much of it, but who could have expected..."

Dafei said worriedly, "Can this part be broadcast?"

Hu Fei looked at the two of them. "Why not?"

Dafei said, "But didn't those associations..."

Xiao Lu also asked, "What if they come here and find fault with us? Will we be able to handle them?"

At this, Hu Fei suddenly said, "I also used to feel that we should follow the guidelines from the relevant organizations and make sure that 'positive energy' songs are sung. But when I heard The Clown's song, I suddenly had a change of heart! Find fault with us? Let them come then! Zhang Ye's the most troublesome person of all, but we still hired the biggest troublemaker in the entertainment industry to be our program's executive producer. Why should we be afraid of attracting any other trouble?"

Dafei chuckled, "Alright!"

Xiao Lu also got excited all at once. "Understood!"

Suddenly, Petal Shower came over.

Hu Fei started and looked at her.

Petal Shower said, "Director Hu, since we're currently in the intermission, I came over to look for you about something."

Hu Fei said, "Just speak. What's the matter?"

Petal Shower solemnly said, "I'd like to change my second round song."

Dafei was taken aback. "Change your song? At this time?"

Petal Shower nodded. "Yes."

Sunset Glow also walked over from afar. When she saw Petal Shower, she was surprised as well. Then, without saying anything to her, she walked up to Hu Fei and said, "Director Hu, I'd like to change my second song."

Xiao Lu exclaimed, "You want to change your song too?"

Hu Fei looked at the two of them. "Can you tell me why?"

Petal Shower thought for a while. "For the sake of dignity."

Sunset Glow looked at her and nodded. "For dignity."

Xiao Lu said anxiously, "But it's too late for that now. We're already—"

"OK!" Hu Fei cut her off. "I'll approve it!"

Xiao Lu groaned, "But, Brother Hu, this—"

Hu Fei dismissed her complaint with a wave of his hands. "It's settled. Please get ready!"

...

In the waiting room.

Zhang Ye came back alone and sat down on the sofa. He drank some water and continued to stay silent. He had sung all that he wanted to say about his past few years of experiences and plights. But for some reason, he was still unable to calm down on the inside. Instead, he was angering even further!

He felt a cell phone's vibration come from his bag.

Zhang Ye looked over and dug out the offending cell phone. It was his personal cell phone, and the caller ID was displaying the name of Wu Zeqing's secretary: Bai Li.

He picked up.

Zhang Ye said: "Hello?"

Secretary Bai immediately said: "Is this Teacher Zhang?"

Zhang Ye said, "This is he."

"Chief Wu is away on an overseas business trip, so it's not convenient for her to contact you. She wanted me to pass you the message that she already knows about what's going on here and that she'll handle it as soon as possible. I'll also be helping to sort out the issue regarding your two songs and—"

Zhang Ye interrupted: "I don't care about my affairs. Secretary Bai, you all may ban 'A Letter to Home' and 'The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol' as you wish. I'll accept it without grudges. I was already mentally prepared for all of this. It's also fine if you want to withdraw the Brain Gold advertisement and any of my other works. I can deal with all the trouble that I've caused on my own.

If I can't handle it, I'll accept the consequences! But what has this got to do with King of Masked Singers? What has this got to do with the other singers in show business? Can't you all leave the contestants in peace? Can't you all leave a way out for the television variety industry's workers who are battling on the front lines? Can't you guys do that?"

Secretary Bai hurriedly replied: "Teacher Zhang, you've misunderstood, you've really misunderstood. The matter this time was really not handled by us at the SARFT. We wrote up a guiding white paper related to musical and film work directives, but it was definitely not supposed to be like this. I assure you that this was not our original intent, and that this was just the Beijing Ministry of Culture making things up by themselves! It was just those television associations talking nonsense! We definitely did not issue such guidelines regarding musical pieces! We did not ask for all songs to only spread inspirational messages or positive energy!"

Bai Li did not know what the relationship between Zhang Ye and Wu Zeqing was even now. But she understood quite clearly that the relationship between them was definitely very close. That was why Bai Li spoke to Zhang Ye in a very polite manner, approaching him very professionally from her official standpoint. She spoke to Zhang Ye in the same way she would speak to Chief Wu.

Secretary Bai said: "Teacher Zhang, I'll handle this matter from here on out, and I'll get it taken care of immediately. The lower-downs are much too outrageous! Leave this matter to me!"

She ended the call.

A knock on the door followed.

Zhang Ye tucked his cell phone away and said to the outside, "Please come in."

Han Qi, Xiao Lu, and a few others came into the room. "Teacher Clown."

"What's the matter?" Zhang Ye asked.

Xiao Lu replied, "It's nothing. W-We're just here to see you."

Worried, Han Qi asked, "Teacher, are you alright?"

Zhang Ye nodded. "I'm fine."

Han Qi said, "Your condition today as compared to the previous times...I'm afraid..."

Today, The Clown was indeed different from before. Han Qi and the program team staff felt an ominous feeling about it and were afraid that The Clown would start having negative thoughts and do something irrational due to those associations taking large-scale actions to ban music pieces. Maybe he would withdraw from the competition?

The program team staff were trying very hard for the longest time to find out what he was thinking.

Zhang Ye took a while before he finally understood their worries and concerns. Then he laughed.

Withdraw from the competition?

Don't worry, I won't do that!

Even if the sky is falling, I won't run away!

Besides, the sky hasn't even fallen yet, right?

When he thought about this, Zhang Ye froze.

His works were taken down!

His commercial was taken down!

Getting banned!

His musical pieces got restricted!

Several associations all came pointing their fingers at him!

If it were anyone else, they would probably have quit at such a time. Even a clay figure would retain some fire, let alone such a

notorious figure like Zhang Ye. Who in the entertainment industry didn't know about that foul temper of his? But with everything turning out this way, Zhang Ye suddenly realized that while he was angry and disappointed, he still believed deep down inside that everything would work out!

Only then did he realize that he was never a pessimistic person to begin with. He was more of a natural fighter. He might feel dejected, lonely, and hopeless at times, but he would never shirk from a battle he had to fight!

Chapter 1059: 'The Internationale'!

Three contestants asked for a last-minute song change!

An hour later, the fifth episode's elimination round of King of Masked Singers officially began recording.

The three contestants who advanced into the battle round were Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, and The Clown. The remaining contestants of Flowing Time and the two replacement masked singers had all lost in the first round.

Onstage.

One of the replacement masked singers was singing "The Colors of Youth" loudly.

"Don't expect too much of some people.

"Don't be too stubborn with some things.

"Maybe someday, we'll look back on the past.

"And you'll realize that some things can't be changed."

The audience's eyes lit up!

"It's not a children's song!"

"This is great!"

"I was so sick of listening to all those children's songs today!"

"What's going on? Why did they started singing this type of song as well?"

"This should be a pessimistic song, right? Right?"

"They were all affected by The Clown! Everyone is finally angry! They're just singing as they should now. What censorship? What guidelines? They're not going to listen to them anymore!"

"We're finally listening to a proper song!"

"The song that The Clown sang was not for nothing. Everyone

has been awakened!"

"All those lousy associations know is how to give arbitrary directions!"

"That's right. A nice, world-class variety show was nearly wrecked by their meddling!"

The elimination round ended and Flowing Time managed to keep his place in the competition with a Hokkien song.

Next up was the fifth episode's battle to be Masked King.

The first contestant to take to the stage was Petal Shower, followed by Sunset Glow.

The two of them had also changed the songs they were to perform. They stuck to their previous approach in the competition and sang in their same respective styles. The audience was largely enjoying their performances as they completely differed from their performances in the first round.

Sunset Glow finished her part of the recording.

Dong Shanshan went up on stage and announced, "Next up, let's welcome the last contestant—The Clown."

However, even before the audience could applaud, a group of people suddenly arrived and interrupted the entire recording process. Eight or nine people dressed in suits had barged right into the studio!

Xiao Lu was startled and immediately went to stop them. "What are you people trying to do!"

The leader of the group was a middle-aged man who said coldly, "I'm from the Television Show Association!"

Dafei also went over. "We're in the midst of recording a show!"

"I don't care about that!" Another middle-aged man said, "We were here two days ago and made the guidelines very clear at that time. And what's happening here and now? You didn't listen to a

single word we said, did you?"

The people from the association were here!

No one knew how they received the tip, but they rushed over immediately to deal with things when they found out about the discordant factors that had occurred during the recording of King of Masked Singers.

Hu Fei was angry. He strode forward and confronted them. "This is a recording studio! Unauthorized personnel are not allowed in here! Whatever you have to say, you have to wait until we're done recording!"

That person from the association said, "You don't have to record the show anymore!"

"What do you mean?" Hu Fei sneered.

Behind them, an executive from Beijing Television rushed over after hearing about this interruption.

The middle-aged man from the association said firmly, "We stated the guidelines clearly the other day. Are you all deliberately trying to cause trouble? Alright then, let's see whose backing is stronger!" He turned to his secretary and said, "Issue an order to the relevant departments, then get in touch with Director Zhou and immediately notify him about this!"

The secretary said, "Understood!" Then he stepped to the side to make the call.

The Beijing Television executive asked, "Old Hu, what's going on?"

Hu Fei did not know how to answer him.

Sunset Glow, who had just finished her song, was frowning.

Petal Shower's face sank.

The judges on the guessing panel looked over.

Zhang Xia frowned. "Those people are from the authorities?"

Amy said, "What are they doing here at a time like this? Will recording still continue?"

Wang Zhuishu said angrily, "The cameras are still rolling. How can they just charge in like that? What is happening? Even if they're higher-ups from the authorities, there's no need for such behavior, is there?"

The audience was not having any of this either!

"Fuck!"

"These bastards!"

"They've really come?"

"Fucking hell, what are they doing!"

"Are they here to cause trouble?"

"That's what I'm wondering too. It's just singing. Why are they making this so difficult!"

"It's over. We won't be able to finish the recording today."

"What the hell is going on!"

"How infuriating!"

"Are they really going to impose all those regulations on the music industry? Aren't they a little too hell-bent on that?"

"This move doesn't make any sense at all!"

"The people won't even have the right to listen to the music they like anymore?"

"Do we really look like such pushovers to them?"

"We have our own thinking process and we know how to judge right from wrong. We don't need you people poking your nose into our business!"

"They're taking us for slaves!"

"Ai, don't bring that up. We're just a bunch of powerless folk, a bunch of shitty workers. How can we possibly stand up to them!"

Dong Shanshan looked down into the audience.

Over there, the group of people from the association were arguing with the program team!

Flowing Time walked over.

The two replacement masked singers also appeared there.

But right at that moment, a shadowy figure suddenly took the stage as if no one were present. The figure stood in front of the microphone stand and adjusted it, then looked over to Music Director Bai Yuanfei and the band.

They instantly understood.

Bai Yuanfei hesitated for a moment before nodding.

Straight away, a drumbeat kicked

The guitar strummed!

Hu Fei, Xiao Lu, Dafei, and the others from the program team were stunned. Music? Where did the music come from? They looked over to the source of the sound and realized that The Clown was standing on the stage!

Petal Shower was stunned!

Sunset Glow was startled!

Flowing Time widened his eyes a bit and stared!

Meanwhile, those people from the association were angered.

"What is that?"

"Get him off the stage!"

"Why is he still singing!"

The audience was caught off guard too. No one knew what The Clown was planning or what he was going to sing. But for some

reason, when that passionate music started playing, excitement surged through the crowd!

Then The Clown opened his mouth!

With that, the studio was shocked!

The first sound that came out when his mouth opened was a roaring high note!

The Clown pointed to the ceiling and [screamed](#).

"Arise!

"ye pris'ners of starvation!

"Arise!

"ye wretched of the Earth!

"For justice thunders condemnation: "A better world's in birth!"

Arise?

Prisoners?

Arise?

Condemnation?

The program team staff were dumbfounded!

Petal Shower and Sunset Glow were staring with mouths agape!

The audience felt the rush of hot blood course through them!

What was this song?

Just what the fuck was this song?

Someone looked at the teleprompter screen!

"The Internationale"?

Rock?

The Clown was singing loudly and angrily in a high pitch. He had never sung in such a way on this stage before. Today was the first time he was doing so. It was as though he wanted to use this song

to sing the anger in his heart!

"No more tradition's chains shall bind us!

"Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!

"The Earth shall rise on new foundations: "We have been naught;
we shall be all!"

The faces of those people from the association darkened as they
got infuriated!

However, the live studio audience was brought to a blood boiling
high from listening to the song!

The Clown pointed at them and sang loudly.

"'Tis the final conflict;

"Let each stand in his place.

"The International working class / Shall be the human race!"

The Clown [raised one of his hands high in a clenched fist](#) —the
universal symbol of industrial workers all over the world!

International?

"The Internationale"?

The International Workers' Association?

This was a song of the workers?

This was a song for ordinary folk like them?

Chen Guang was visibly moved!

Amy was listening in disbelief!

The Clown sang loudly.

"We want no condescending saviors

"To rule us from their judgment hall; "We workers ask not for
their favors.

"Let us consult for all."

No one can help us!

But neither do we expect a savior to come forward!

We have ourselves!

We have weapons!

Arise!

Don't be afraid!

Arise!

People who are like me!

The Clown screamed.

"To make the thief disgorge his booty "To free the spirit from its cell,

"We must ourselves decide our duty, "We must decide, and do it well."

Suddenly, a middle-aged man in the audience raised his hand high and displayed the gesture of the International Workers' Association, then stood up silently!

A young man beside him also proudly raised a fist as The Clown did earlier as he slowly stood up as well!

Then a third person!

Followed by a tenth person!

A fiftieth!

A hundred people!

The Clown sang loudly.

"'Tis the final conflict;

"Let each stand in his place.

"The International working class / Shall be the human race!"

Chen Guang stood up and raised his right hand!

Amy stood up and raised her right hand!

Wang Zhuishu!

Yao Jiancai!

Petal Shower!

Sunset Glow!

They all raised their hands in a clenched fist!

Han Qi also raised her right hand. She was bursting with emotion and could not help herself, having been influenced by the mood in the studio.

Dafei raised his right hand proudly!

Xiao Lu slowly brought her hand up as well!

A hundred people!

Three hundred people!

Five hundred people!

At this moment, no one in the studio was sitting down!

Even some of the backstage staff stood up with their right hands raised as hot tears welled up in their eyes!

The Clown sang loudly.

"How many on our flesh have fattened; "But if the noisome birds of prey

"Shall vanish from the sky some morning, "The blessed sunlight still will stay."

All of a sudden, without anyone leadership, without anyone saying a word, and with the entire audience seeming to have discussed it beforehand, everyone started singing loudly along with The Clown.

"'Tis the final conflict;

"Let each stand in his place.

"The International working class

"Shall be the human race!"

Petal Shower was singing!

Sunset Glow was singing!

Bai Yuanfei was singing!

Chen Guang was singing!

Zhang Xia was singing!

Amy was singing!

"'Tis the final conflict; / Let each stand in his place.

"The International working class / Shall be the human race!

"The International working class / Shall be the human race!"

The nearly thousand people present were singing with raised right fists!

If someone witnessed such a scene, they would be deeply shocked. This shock was something that simply could not be described in words. The source of this shocking scene originated from something known as dignity!

Chapter 1060: A battle for music and dignity!

" [The Internationale](#) " also existed in this world!

There was also a song for the International Workers' Association in this world!

But it didn't sound as passionate or indomitable as this version!

This song was " [The Internationale](#) " from Zhang Ye's previous world. It was the most famous song of the international Communist movement. The Soviet Union had used it as a national anthem, and it was even an openly acknowledged Communist song. You could even find traces of "The Internationale" within the melody and lyrics of China's national anthem. Historically, this song carried a great significance for the past generations and had left its mark all around the world. And Zhang Ye had sung just that song. It was the rock version by the [domestic Chinese rock band, Tang Dynasty!](#)

Positive energy?

There should be no other song with more positive energy than this song!

Although it was no longer that era anymore!

Although many young people had forgotten!

Although this song had gradually exited stage left from history!

Its spirit was still around!

Its dignity was still around!

Its anger was still around!

Zhang Ye believed that this was a peaceful and orderly world. He loved this new world that split away from his previous world. But there existed some black sheep he could not tolerate and some

forms of oppression he had to resist!

Banning pieces of music across the board that carried any hint of negativity?

He could not accept it!

Love songs were also considered songs that spread negativity?

He could not accept it!

So he rose up!

And along with him, everyone in the studio rose up!

As Flowing Time looked at The Clown onstage, he suddenly felt a sense of respect for him. The song had awakened many of his memories. He suddenly remembered that he had his pride too and that he should also rise up to resist!

For music!

Or maybe for dignity!

'Tis the final conflict!

'Tis the final battlefield!

They had no room for retreat!

The song ended but no one sat down!

The expressions of the association members were as ugly as they could get. They could not say anything, because in this atmosphere and situation facing everyone's anger, they did not risk saying another word more. The middle-aged man who was leading the group looked at his colleagues behind him as their group exchanged looks before they quietly left the place in defeat.

When those troublemakers left, recording of the show continued.

The results of the fifth episode's voting came out very quickly!

Petal Shower: 21 votes!

Sunset Glow: 18 votes!

The Clown: 461 votes!

It was an overwhelming victory!

The Clown became the Masked King in the fifth episode with a dominating number of votes!

Earth-shattering applause, cheers, and screams instantly rang out in the studio!

...

Sunday.

King of Masked Singers was broadcast.

"Ah?"

"Why is it all children's songs?"

"How boring!"

"Aiya, it's The Clown's turn!"

"'I'm a Small, Little Bird'? This song is really great!"

"It's such a nice song!"

At the start, everyone was watching the show without expecting much. But when The Clown's performance of "The Internationale" came on, everyone was shocked!

"Arise!

"ye pris'ners of starvation!

"Arise!

"ye wretched of the Earth!

"For justice thunders condemnation: "We have been naught; we shall be all!"

...

At a music production company.

It was very late, but a lot of people were still working overtime to

help several singers cut some of their new albums' songs that did not comply with the regulations.

"Quick, everyone. Let's work a little harder on it."

"But how are we supposed to change this line in the lyrics?"

"Director Li, the singers are protesting strongly against this!"

"Actually, I also feel that this part is quite good. If we have to change it, then we might as well change the entire song!"

"Do we have to do it this way from now on?"

"Yeah, do all the songs have to be like this in the future?"

"If all the songs are this similar, how can we still call this music?"

Everyone had very strong opinions about it, and they even had the impulse to just quit!

Suddenly, a female employee in the office space shouted, "Hey! Come and watch this!"

"Watch what?"

"What's the matter, Little He?"

"Quick, watch King of Masked Singers!"

"We're in a tight squeeze and you're watching TV? Their show is definitely facing the same problems as we are since all pieces of music are being restricted now. The restrictions they have are even stricter than ours, so what's the point of watching their show when it's expected that their performances will all be either revolutionary songs or children's songs?"

"Yeah, do your work."

"Aiyo, guys! Just come here and watch!"

Everyone was wondering what was going on as they eventually gathered around her.

When "The Internationale" played onstage; when The Clown's

angry shouting roared through the studio; when the entire audience, all the judges, and staff members in the studio slowly rose up with their right fists raised!

The company's staff were stunned and their jaws dropped!

Hot blood coursed through their veins!

"Someone has come forward!"

"Someone in the music industry has finally come forward!"

"The Clown?"

"What a good song 'The Internationale' is!"

"He's fighting for the truth?"

Suddenly, an employee threw down the stack of documents in his hands and said, "Dammit, I'm not changing this anymore! Is there any meaning to it if we end up making a crappy piece of music after making the changes?"

Three people!

Five people!

Ten people!

All of them put down the tasks they had on hand!

.....

At Zhang Yuanqi's house.

Watching the show on television, she was left speechless by what she saw.

Fang Weihong's chin was trembling as she watched the show. She was neither a nationalist nor someone who liked getting angry. As an elite manager in the entertainment industry, she had gotten used to such situations and seen past all of it. But today, when she heard The Clown's "The Internationale," Fang Weihong did not know why or how, but her usually weak fist was clenched so tight that her fingernails were digging into her palms, and she

was nearly bleeding!

She could feel the blood coursing through her veins!

...

On Weibo.

A highly respected veteran artist in the music industry finally said something!

It was a domestic veteran singer who was from the same generation as Zhang Xia. In fact, he had even debuted several years earlier than her. He had come from an art troupe and had a military background. He was the famous singer Cui Haiquan!

Cui Haiquan: "Regarding the recent implementation of the new regulations for works of music, I will neither acknowledge nor accept it. This is as good as strangling the life out of the music scene! This is basically going to kill the music scene! Musicians, please don't remain silent anymore! Musicians, this is our last line of defense! Musicians, please rise up!"

The netizens were greatly shocked!

"Another person has come forward!"

"It's Grandpa Cui!"

"Grandpa Cui is amazing!"

A few minutes later!

Zhang Xia and a group of veteran singers jointly issued a response: "Arise, ye musicians! Arise, 'tis the final conflict! From now on, we will never take a step back!"

Chen Guang spoke up: "Arise, ye singers!"

Fan Wenli spoke up: "Please rise up, China's musicians!"

Xiaodong, Amy, and Li Xiaoxian issued a response as a group: "Please rise up for the last shreds of our dignity as musicians! Please rise up and fight together with us!"

A lyricist: "Arise, ye musicians!"

A composer: "Arise! We can no longer retreat!"

Ten!

Twenty!

Fifty!

"The Internationale" had united the entire music industry!

The Heavenly Kings spoke up!

The Heavenly Queens spoke up!

The music companies spoke up!

Each and every one of the musicians stood up!

This was the first time people in the music industry had ever responded in such a united manner!

This was a battle!

A battle for music and dignity!

Chapter 1061: Victory for the musicians!

The music industry raised a furor!

The people from the television industry were shocked by what they were seeing.

"The music industry is at war with the associations!"

"How fierce!"

"It's making my blood course with passion!"

"Good showing, brothers!"

"They really spoke up. There are this many of them coming forward? All of the veterans, singers, rookies, lyricists, and composers in the music industry have come forward?"

"This is an event that will definitely go down in the annals of history!"

"Just what will the final outcome of this battle be?"

"Dunno. Now we see how the authorities react!"

"It's definitely going to be hard to deal with. If it were just one or two people, it might not be so bad. But with this large group that even includes some of China's veteran singers, influential singers from the Political Department's Song and Dance Troupe, and the Heavenly Kings and Queens protesting against the ban on musical pieces, how could they handle it? I think this is going to be difficult to answer since the most important factor is still the SARFT's attitude on the issue. But they haven't issued a response to this yet!"

This was a big event in the music industry!

With the involvement of so many celebrities, the news had spread far and wide!

The netizens were very excited!

"Just one song is enough to cause such huge trouble?"

"I have to give it to The Clown!"

"Which celebrity could this fellow be!"

"Fight! Fight! Fight!"

"Supporting our musicians!"

"They have my support too!"

"I must really give a Like to the music industry this time!"

Many people were paying constant attention to the developments as this issue was getting way too serious. If it was not properly handled, it would cause a major shakeup!

...

Elsewhere.

Bai Li was currently on the phone with someone.

"Hello, Secretary Bai."

"Director Han, I've finally managed to reach you."

"I've been away for a meeting the past few days and just got back today."

"Have you heard yet?"

"Of course I've heard."

"What's going on over on your side? Why did you guys suddenly decide to roll out a ban on musical pieces? Who approved the decision? Who agreed to it?"

"Wasn't the SARFT going to introduce something similar? And weren't the directives going to be announced very soon as well?"

"We have indeed come up with a new white paper listing some music and film work directives, but when did we state it in a way like you? When did we say that we would not allow the broadcast and composition of music pieces that don't generate positivity?"

Have you even seen our documents? Do you all know what the intent of the white paper is? We simply wanted to standardize some regulations, not call for restraint or a ban without valid reasons! What has it become now? Look at how things have turned out. Many musicians refuse to accept it. Did you guys consider the consequences of your actions? Did you think of the negative impact caused by your mishandling?"

"Secretary Bai, the SARFT has its considerations and we have ours. After all, the scope of our work is different, and besides—"

"Are you sure you still want to go on about this? Fine, let me tell you this then. This matter was entrusted to me by Chief Wu personally. She's still overseas at the moment and can come back on today's flight. If my words are ineffective, fine. But when Chief Wu gets back tonight, maybe I should get her to contact you personally? Would that be better?"

At this, Director Han anxiously said: "How could I make Chief Wu personally call me?" He gave a bitter laugh and said: "Secretary Bai, please don't get me into trouble."

Bai Li said: "The SARFT is very unhappy with how the Beijing Ministry of Culture has handled things this time. It's not that I'm trying to get you into trouble; it's your own people who are messing things up! We only have one request right now, and that is to call for an immediate withdrawal of the guidelines that you all announced earlier, as well as those so-called directives by the relevant associations! When the finalized white paper is published by the SARFT, any new regulations introduced will be done in consideration of the SARFT's directives!"

Director Han said: "That's not really for me to decide."

Bai Li was annoyed. "Alright, I'll get someone who can make the decision on your behalf then!"

...

An hour later.

An executive from the Ministry of Culture was startled!

This executive was not from the local department of the Ministry of Culture, but a more senior leader above them!

Perhaps it was Bai Li or someone else from the SARFT who had communicated it to him. But it was only then that he realized that the so-called guidelines issued by the local department below was from some hearsay and actually very imprecise due to the fact that the SARFT had not officially passed down their directives yet. But because of the local department's authoritarianism, the other associations had misunderstood and treated the guidelines like an imperial edict by rushing to implement those orders. This resulted in an irreversible situation!

That executive spoke with the SARFT for a very long time.

These two organizations carried out a simple but in-depth discussion of the incident.

In the end, that executive from the Ministry of Culture made a call to the local Beijing office that started this trouble and chewed them out!

"It wasn't easy for our country to get such a high-quality domestic variety show produced. Why are you all causing all this trouble for me now! Don't you all want our domestic works to be successful? Don't you hope that our domestic works can wade into the international market? You're even insisting that all music pieces should only spread positivity? Music is a form of art, and the expression of art is very diverse! Why do they all have to generate positive energy? If you don't even have this bit of tolerance or artistry, how can you continue to be part of the business of cultural undertakings?"

"Sir, we..."

"Withdraw all those guidelines pronto!"

"Yes, alright, we understand!"

"If this happens again, I want you to pack up and get out!"

"We're sorry, sir! We misunderstood the policies! We will not repeat this mistake again. It, it was really a misunderstanding this time!"

"Leave such matters to our SARFT colleagues in the future. Did you all have nothing better to do than get involved in this affair?! Aren't you just stirring up trouble!"

In this world, the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and the SARFT was without a clear boundary. Some responsibilities overlapped, while some were distinct. However, most of the decision-making on policies regarding the entertainment industry still lay with the SARFT.

"I-I understand!"

"I'll say this again: It better not happen another time!"

"Yes, sir! There won't be another time!"

As the executive from the Ministry of Culture was very understanding and had a good relationship with Wu Zeqing, the issue was resolved very quickly. Actually, even if this relationship with Wu Zeqing did not exist, he would still have to handle such matters. It was due to the strategic failure of his staff at the local office and their misunderstanding of the policy resolutions that led to such a strong backlash. The entire music industry was angered as a result, so he had to say something even if he did not wish to interfere. If things went on like that, then it would really spiral out of control and cause a huge mess. He had to handle it no matter what. He couldn't possibly let one bad apple spoil the whole barrel. The Ministry of Culture had always been very open-minded about things and seldom interfered with the SARFT's business!

Before long, the guidelines from earlier were withdrawn!

There was no explanation or clarifications made!

There weren't any signs that this would happen!

They were withdrawn just like that!

The netizens soon took notice.

"Aiya!"

"The directives have been withdrawn!"

"Quick, look at this. The guidelines from earlier are gone!"

"Did they accidentally delete them?"

"It's impossible that they'd accidentally delete them!"

"Then does this set the tone?"

"It's set! It's definitely been set!"

"Wow, there's an exec from the Ministry of Culture who gave a Like to 'The Internationale'!"

"Another exec from the Minister of Culture liked it!"

"Damn, you're right!"

Everyone was shocked to find out that The Clown's "The Internationale" had received several Likes from a few executives of the Ministry of Culture's upper management on their Weibo verified accounts.

One of the executives even left a comment. "Hur hur, this is a great song with great lyrics. I was reminded of things from long ago and felt a little touched. I'm really fond of those memories from that time."

The SARFT also issued a statement not long afterwards to appease the musicians. It clarified that the guidelines from before were not introduced by them and that their designated standards would only restrict some song titles and other works that were too vulgar and implied death. There was no intention of a large-scale blanket ban on music pieces and films! In reality, it wasn't that the SARFT or the Ministry of Culture's upper management were

seeking to compromise on those measures. From the start, they didn't intend to introduce them at all. It was all blindly caused by those below them!

They set the tone!

The netizens were stunned!

The musicians cheered at once!

And just a few minutes later, Zhang Ye's "A Letter to Home" and "The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol" returned to the Top Chinese Music Chart and continued to rule the rankings!

Unsurprisingly, the #1 spot went to "The Internationale"!

"The Internationale" seemed to have steamrolled straight to #1 on the Top Chinese Music Chart's daily chart and even to #1 on the monthly chart!

Yes, #1 on the monthly chart!

In just a single day!

It charged its way right up to first place on the monthly chart in just a single day!

This was an extremely rare occurrence in the history of the Top Chinese Music Chart!

But The Clown managed to do it!

This song did it!

Chapter 1062: The grand finals approach!

Han Qi called The Clown.

"Teacher Clown!"

"Hello."

"We won! We won!"

"Yeah, I already knew."

"You're incredible! That song of yours is incredible! I can't believe that they really gave in!"

"I can't take the credit. This was due to the persistence and hard work of the entire music industry."

"But it was your song that roused the musicians!"

"Surely I'm not that great."

"But you really are that great!"

The guillotine hanging over the head of the music industry had finally been lifted. The music industry was cheering and jumping for joy, celebrating their win. But maybe it was better to say it was music and dignity that won!

Netizens made countless comments.

"We won!"

"The higher-ups are still pretty open-minded about things!"

"I have a feeling that 'The Internationale' will become a legend!"

"With this story, the song should already be considered a legend. Have you ever seen a piece of music that has such great appeal and influence?"

"A legendary song, and a legendary person!"

"But just who could The Clown be?"

"Hurry up and take off your mask! The suspense is killing me!"

"When will the grand finals of King of Masked Singers take place?"

"Yeah, I can't wait either. The Masked King these days is always either Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, or The Clown. It's always them fighting for the throne every episode. The new replacement masked singers aren't really a match for them at all. So I believe that the grand finals should be held quite soon?"

"Who do you guys want to see take off their masks the most?"

"The Clown!"

"Fuck, of course it has to be The Clown!"

"Right, only his identity still remains a mystery. No one has managed to guess it yet!"

On that night.

The King of Masked Singers program team suddenly announced that the next episode of the show would kick off the revival round of the competition. Whether it was the contestants who started in the premiere episode or the replacement masked singers, all of them would be entered into the revival round as long as they had not been crowned Masked King before. Meaning that even those who still remained in the competition, as long as they had not been crowned Masked King before, would be required to compete against the contestants who had been eliminated for the remaining spots in the grand finals, which would be broadcast live. A total of five episodes had been broadcast so far, in which The Clown had taken the throne of the Masked King thrice, Petal Shower once, and Sunset Glow once. That meant that only the three of them could advance straight into the grand finals of the competition.

...

The program team contacted Spinach.

"Teacher Spinach, the revival round will begin soon."

"Alright."

"Please get ready."

"I can't wait."

...

"Teacher Marshal Persona."

"Hello."

"We'll be recording the revival round next week."

"OK, got it."

...

"Teacher King of Oddity."

"Is it beginning soon?"

"Yes, recording will start next week."

"Alright. How many spots will there be in the grand finals?"

"Other than The Clown, Petal Shower, and Sunset Glow holding three spots, three remaining spots are up for grabs."

"Understood."

...

Many of the eliminated contestants received this update from the program team. Some of them were anticipating it, some were nervous about it, and others were worried about it. But without an exception, all of them immediately went to prepare after receiving notification of this news. This was their final chance, and they all wanted to make the best of it!

Zhang Ye also received a call.

But this call was about something different.

Hu Fei said, "Teacher Clown, the issue has been resolved. We want to thank you for doing so much for the show. If it wasn't for you, the restrictions wouldn't have been lifted, and there wouldn't

have been any meaning to the grand finals!"

"There's no need to thank me; I didn't do much."

"The revival round will be held next week, and the grand finals the week after that."

Hu Fei had called The Clown's cell phone number. So Zhang Ye had to deliberately disguise and change his vocal register when speaking. He said: "So soon?"

"We initially planned for it to happen after six or seven episodes were broadcast. But the disparity in talent is too great for the next replacement masked singers to compete against. So the program team called for a meeting where we decided that we wouldn't be adding any more replacement masked singers and instead move the date of the grand finals forward."

"I see."

"You won't need to do any prepping for the revival round. The main thing that I want to talk about is the details of the grand finals. These grand finals will be broadcast live nationwide, and the location will change as well to a larger venue. The voting format will also be changed to a public vote, that is to say, the television audience can also take part in the voting. On top of that, the grand finals will have two rounds, with the second round being an individual performance. Meanwhile, we have designed the first round with a segment where a contestant will perform with a guest partner. The contestants can invite a good friend of theirs and get them to put on a mask as well, then sing together on stage. This is an important segment because if the guest partner is not suitable for the competition, the contestant might not be able to advance to the second round and end up getting eliminated. That's why you'd need to prepare well for this and hopefully invite a professional singer. The more popular the guest partner is, the better. It would also help to garner more votes for the contestant."

This was Hu Fei's decision.

Zhang Ye had provided him with a program structure that had several formats for the grand finals. For example, in the Chinese version of King of Masked Singers in his previous world, two contestants were paired up into groups and the groups would verse each other in a knockout format. However, Zhang Ye knew that this format would not make the show exciting to watch, so he added another one that was similar to the format of the finals of I Am a Singer. He left that for Hu Fei to decide, and clearly, he had chosen the latter. This was quite a good choice since it would add to the viewing experience and anticipation of the audience.

"OK."

"Do you have any other questions? I can answer over the phone."

The Clown asked, "Are there any limitations to the choices of song?"

"There are basically no limitations. You can sing anything you want."

The Clown asked further: "For the group segment, can we choose to sing alone and not invite a guest?"

"Sing alone?"

"Is that allowed?"

Hu Fei shook his head. "That's definitely not allowed. As the show rules are set that way, you can either invite one or two guest partners. But they have to at least sing together with you."

"OK, I understand."

"That's good then. We'll see you in the grand finals."

"Alright, I'll prepare well."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye was in a quandary.

A celebrity guest partner?

If the performance wasn't good enough, they might get

eliminated in the first round? Then there wouldn't be a chance to take part in the battle round for the overall Masked King of the grand finals? This was a little troublesome to handle. His troubles stemmed from him not wanting anyone to find out about who he really was. If no one knew who he was, then how could he possibly invite anyone? Who could he invite?

His social ties within the entertainment circle was already abysmal, and he didn't know that many people either. There were even fewer choices if he needed someone who could sing. Zhang Xia? She was already on the guessing panel of judges. Chen Guang too. It would be impossible to invite them. How about Fan Wenli? Old Fan was even more impossible! Xiaodong? She was probably going to become someone else's guest partner.

Who could he find?

Someone was friends with him?

And had to sing well?

They even had to be a big name?

There was no one!

As he thought about it, it seemed like there was no one suitable among the people he knew!

Zhang Ye lit a cigarette and pondered for a long time but came up with nothing. This celebrity guest partner was simply too important. It directly affected whether or not he could become the Masked King of the grand finals, so he definitely had to consider everything carefully! Hai, if only he had known. He wouldn't have put this suggestion into the plan in the first place. This was as good as shooting himself in the foot.

There were only two weeks left!

What should he do until then?

Chapter 1063: A candidate to be the celebrity guest partner!

Next Saturday.

In the evening.

The television was on and tuned into Beijing Television.

His mother was sitting on the sofa and chomping on melon seeds.
"Why isn't it starting yet?"

"Little Ye, is today the revival round?" his father asked.

Zhang Ye said, "Yes, and next week will be the grand finals."

His mother asked, "Who will be revived today? Hurry up and tell us!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "How would I know? I wasn't at the recording yesterday, so we'll find out later as we watch. I feel that Spinach has got quite a good chance though."

His mother said, "That King of Oddity from the first episode is quite good too!"

Ring ring ring. His cell phone rang.

Zhang Ye answered: "Sister Xiaodong?"

Xiaodong immediately asked: "Teacher Zhang, whatcha up to?"

"Hai, just watching TV at home," Zhang Ye said.

"Ummm, it's almost time for the college entrance exam. Did you not get selected to be a question setter this year?"

Zhang Ye chuckled and said: "I wasn't called up this year. They originally said that I would be asked to do it again, but with all the negative publicity surrounding me recently, and coupled with the questions that I set at last year's Beijing college entrance exam being a little too difficult, the examinees and their parents started

protesting against my appointment two months ago. They were all afraid that I would become the national examination question setter this year, so I ended up not getting appointed. Actually, I don't really want to go too. It's really a thankless task."

"Then about that matter I brought up to you regarding my relative?"

Zhang Ye said: "It's always been on my mind, and I've already asked around for him. As long as your relative's score passes the Peking University cutoff grade, he'll be guaranteed an admission spot for any major that he chooses!"

This was a favor that Xiaodong had asked of him when he first joined the Goof Group last year. He hadn't forgotten all this while and had already helped her ask around. When it came to favors that people asked of him, Zhang Ye had always made sure to do the best he could.

Xiaodong laughed happily. "Thanks, Teacher Zhang."

"Don't mention it. It was no trouble at all." Then, he suddenly remembered the rules of the grand finals and how he didn't have a guest partner yet. He offhandedly asked: "Oh right, Sister Xiaodong, do you have any plans next Saturday?"

Xiaodong was taken aback. "Next Saturday? Isn't that day the night of the King of Masked Singers finale?"

Zhang Ye coughed and said: "Yes."

"Won't you be present at the venue that day? I have something to do that day, so I'll be going too."

Zhang Ye understood immediately. "Oh, so it's like that."

Xiaodong asked: "What about that day?"

"It's nothing. I was just wondering."

Turned out, Xiaodong was going to be at the grand finals.

Actually, Zhang Ye had already figured it to be so, but he wanted

to make sure.

Who else was there then? There were only a few other people who he knew who could sing!

The revival round began.

Spinach, King of Oddity, Flowing Time, Marshal Persona, and several other contestants who had either been eliminated or not taken the throne of the Masked King before were all taking part in this episode, with the exception of Li Yu—Sunflower in the Starlight. Due to what had happened, Beijing Television excluded him after vowing never to work with him again, so only Li Yu was not present today.

This week's episode was intense and passionate.

The audience had already gotten to know some of the contestants whose identities have been revealed. At the same time, there was a lot of suspense for those who had not taken off their masks yet, with the identities of a few contestants still remaining a mystery!

...

"The whistling winds!

"Sailing through the waves!

"When will my heart rest easy!

"Vast skies and wide lands!

"The corners of the world!

"But where are you, my dear!"

Spinach's (Liao Yiqi) song shocked the studio!

Compared to her previous performances, Spinach's progress was obviously a big leap forward. Zhang Ye also heard about how Grandma Zhang Xia had personally given her some guidance to help her polish her technique so that she could bring out the best points of her singing. The song she was currently singing may have

also had a little to do with Zhang Xia's suggestions to her.

Sure enough, it was quite effective!

She sang this song really well!

...

"Aiyoyo.

"Are you coming?

"Heyoyo.

"Where are you?"

Yesterday's Daylily did not perform too well today. He had chosen an older folk song to sing and even rearranged it, but it did not manage to catch the attention of the audience.

He was probably going to miss out on the grand finals.

...

Performance after performance.

All of the contestants gave their very best!

They threw out all the tricks they had left, all for a ticket to the grand finals!

In the end, the results were out.

On TV, Dong Shanshan announced:

"The first contestant to advance to the grand finals is—Flowing Time!"

A round of applause rang out.

Flowing Time had the most votes out of all the contestants.

"The second contestant to advance to the grand finals is—King of Oddity!"

King of Oddity got very excited and threw his hands into the air!

"The final contestant to advance to the grand finals is—Spinach!"

When Spinach heard, she cried there on the spot!

She was crying!

They were tears of joy!

She had said that she would be back, and now, she had really come back!

With that, the three tickets to advance to the grand finals had all been assigned. The others would miss out on the night of the grand finals, and the eliminated singers gave their blessings and encouragement to the three who made it. They wished for them to carry a part of their desire into the grand finals and hoped that they would get a good place and gain fame along with it!

The revival round was over.

But the show was not done yet. In the closing minutes, a video introduced the finale. It introduced the competition format, how it would be broadcast live nationwide, and the first round segment involving a celebrity guest partner for each contestant. There were even a few gimmicky catchphrases thrown out to increase everyone's anticipation of the grand finals.

A voiceover sounded.

"Sunset Glow's heavyweight celebrity guest partner to aid her in the grand finals!"

The video onscreen cut to the back of a woman who was wearing a mask. But as her back was facing the screen, the viewers were unable to recognize who she was.

"Petal Shower's big name celebrity guest partner from the music scene is someone that no one does not know of."

The picture onscreen was overlaid with the words "mystery guest"!

Following, the celebrity guest partners for Spinach, Flowing Time, and the others were confirmed. Due to the show having

been recorded just the day before, the program team had contacted the contestants on the day of after they had made it through to the grand finals to confirm their celebrity guest partners and communicated everything in detail.

The gender of Spinach's celebrity guest partner was unknown, with the image unclear after being pixelated. Only an introduction was made, which did not reveal the person's identity at all.

It was the same for Flowing Time and King of Oddity!

Gimmicky catchphrases were used!

Smokescreens were put up to mislead!

But it was undeniable that this really whetted the appetites of many who were watching. After the introductions were done, everyone was guessing who the invited celebrity guest partners were! They were extremely curious!

...

Back at home.

His mother wondered, "Why wasn't there an introduction for The Clown's celebrity guest partner?"

"Yeah, he was the only one who didn't have an introduction for his guest partner," his father wondered as well.

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile and thought to himself, That's because this bro doesn't know who to invite yet!

At this moment, a call arrived.

It was The Clown's cell phone.

When Zhang Ye saw that, he immediately went into his own room and answered with a disguised voice: "Hello."

Han Qi asked immediately: "Teacher Clown, have you managed to invite your celebrity guest partner yet?"

Zhang Ye stayed silent for a moment. "Not yet."

Han Qi said anxiously: "There's only a week left until the live broadcast of the grand finals. The program team kept urging me to contact you many times. This..."

Zhang Ye said: "Give me a little more time. I'll definitely find someone."

Han Qi said: "Alright, alright. Please hurry then. You really have to get it done as soon as possible. How can someone like you who can sing so well be unable to invite any friends of yours to come? You must be asking for a lot, aren't you?"

Asking a lot, my ass!

This bro really doesn't have that many friends to begin with!

Before long, the news spread all over the Internet.

On Weibo.

"Who could Sunset Glow have invited? Why's it so mysterious?"

"That back looks a little familiar!"

"If she's the person that everyone's guessing she is, then could she have invited our goddess Xiaodong?"

"Wow, are you sure?"

"That would be wonderful!"

"Petal Shower seems to have invited a big name as well!"

"Could it be an A-list celebrity?"

"I heard that an A-lister has really been invited onto the show this time."

"Who, who?"

"I don't know. The biggest name on this stage should have been Li Yu. But he's no longer an A-lister anymore, so could there really be an A-lister coming?"

"I can't wait!"

"Eh, what about The Clown?"

"That's right, we didn't see anything regarding The Clown's celebrity guest partner, right?"

"Why didn't they make any mention of it?"

"I've heard something about that. It seems like The Clown's celebrity guest partner has not been decided yet."

"Surely not, right? He was the among the first batch of contestants to be confirmed for the grand finals. How long has it been since then? The grand finals are next week, but he still hasn't found a partner? Could it be that there's no one he can choose? Or maybe he couldn't get anyone to come onto the show? If that's the case, that'd mean that The Clown lied when he said that he was at least a B-lister. He's probably just some artist who's not that famous. Although he's really shot to fame, since he does not know any fellow big name artists, he couldn't invite any of them onto the show."

"That's quite possible."

"Fuck, can he really be that pathetic?"

"Even if he does not know any big names, he should at least know a few small-timers. Why can't he get them?"

"If he really invites a small-timer as a celebrity guest partner, wouldn't it be as good as giving up on the crown of the Masked King? This is the grand finals we're talking about. The others have all invited big names who're at least B-listers, or if worst comes to worst, C-listers. It's been rumored that there's even an A-lister coming onto the show, but I don't know if that's true or not. If The Clown invites some unknown artist to support him, it'd be awkward if no one knows who that person is when they go onstage. He might even get eliminated right in the first round and lose his qualification to battle for the throne of the Masked King!"

"That's true."

At night.

Zhang Ye was lying in bed and getting ready to sleep. He kept this problem over in his head, unable to fall asleep. So he started browsing his Weibo and saw those comments. He suddenly sat up on his bed and rolled his eyes!

I'm not famous?

I don't know any big names?

Hey, don't make me mad!

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye thought of someone. Then he started thinking about how he should broach the subject and in what way he should do it. He knew that this person would be extremely difficult to invite!

Chapter 1064: Convincing the Heavenly Queen!

The next day.

Zhang Ye got up at five in the morning and started walking around in his room with his hands behind his back. He walked from his room into the living room, then from the living room to the balcony, all the while trying to think of ideas.

His mother yawned as she opened her bedroom door and came out. "Whoa, what are you doing?"

Zhang Ye turned around and said, "Thinking of something."

His mother looked at the clock. "This early?"

Still in his pajamas, his father also came out to have a look. "What are you doing up so early? Do you want to have breakfast?"

"No thanks. Don't worry about me. Go back to bed," Zhang Ye said.

The other contestants had invited very capable guest partners for King of Masked Singers. Although there wasn't a publicized list, Zhang Ye could just about guess who would be there. They were all B-list big shots, so if he wanted to take the crown of the Masked King in the grand finals, the guest partner he invited would be an extremely crucial factor. He already had a candidate in mind. Of all the people he knew, only she was still available as a choice to him.

Yes, that person was Zhang Yuanqi!

The famous Heavenly Queen of the pop music scene and film industry!

This fellow had been stirred up by the netizens' comments that said that he did not know any big name stars! If that was the case, then he would just need to find one to prove them wrong!

An S-list superstar!

The one of very few at the top of the entertainment circle!

How should he ask her?

How should he invite her?

If it were anyone else, they'd definitely not be able to get her to agree!

They wouldn't even have needed to consider it. An S-list celebrity like her would never agree to take part in a singing competition show. If she won on it, it would have been expected. But if she lost, that would be embarrassing. She also didn't need to take part in the show, because at her level, not many things could move her anymore. As such, the biggest celebrity the program team had on their contestants' invitation list when King of Masked Singers started its production was Li Yu, the front runner of the B-list Celebrity Rankings. They did not try to invite any A-list celebrities, much less an S-list Heavenly Queen. Beijing Television and the program team knew that those people would never agree to join their show!

The same was true in Zhang Ye's previous world. It would be almost impossible for the current, most popular Heavenly Kings and Queens to join any singing competitions. Like Faye Wong, would it be possible that she would join one? Or Andy Lau, would that be possible either?

This didn't even need to be touched on!

But luckily, Zhang Ye managed to come up with an idea very quickly. He didn't know if it would work, but with a sparkle in his eye, he quickly returned to his bedroom. He immersed himself into remembering those songs from his previous world that were considered classic male-female duets. Finally, he chose two of them and started writing the lyrics and musical notation down. Other people might not understand Zhang Yuanqi, but he did. She

was someone who was especially nice and friendly to other people in public, but was in fact irascible in private. He knew that Zhang Yuanqi's greatest weakness was that a good song would appeal to her more than anything else.

He kept himself busy with the songwriting until 9 AM, when he finally finished it.

Zhang Ye picked up The Clown's cell phone and called Fang Weihong.

Du du. The call connected.

Zhang Ye spoke very carefully and switched to a gruff voice. "Hello."

Fang Weihong said: "Hello, who is this?"

Zhang Ye: "Is this Zhang Yuanqi's manager, Fang Weihong?"

"This is she," Fang Weihong said.

"This is The Clown." He got straight to the point.

Fang Weihong was stunned. "The Clown? The Clown from King of Masked Singers?"

Zhang Ye said: "Yes."

Fang Weihong immediately said: "We've been trying to find a way to contact you all this time. Sister Zhang has been particularly hoping to get to know you and has mentioned it to me several times already. What is it that you're calling me for?"

"I have something that I would like to seek Teacher Zhang's help for."

"What is it? Can I pass the message along? Or do you want to contact Sister Zhang directly?"

"Well, why don't we do it this way? I'll send two songs over first."

"Songs?"

"Yes."

Fang Weihong was worthy of being an elite manager of the industry. When she heard him say that, she could almost immediately guess what he wanted. "Are you calling about the King of Masked Singers' grand finals? Are you thinking of inviting Sister Zhang to be your celebrity guest partner?"

"Does Teacher Zhang have time?"

"I'm not too sure about that. I have to check."

"OK, I'll send the songs over first then."

"Alright...then. I can only help you ask. But whether it'll work, I can't guarantee. By the way, don't you have a lot of friends in the music scene? Why would you approach Sister Zhang for this?"

"Why does everyone think that I have many friends?"

Fang Weihong chuckled at this.

That's true.

It's not like that was a guaranteed thing.

Just like that Zhang Ye who had a pretty good relationship with Sister Zhang. He was very popular and experienced, but his social ties were just terrible. There was hardly anyone in the entertainment industry who liked him.

Fang Weihong said, "OK, I'll speak to Sister Zhang about this."

"Thank you."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye quietly waited for the outcome.

Ten minutes...

Half an hour...

One hour...

However, Fang Weihong's call did not arrive. Instead, it was Zhang Yuanqi who contacted him. She did not contact him on The Clown's cell phone, but on his personal phone's chat app.

Di di.

Zhang Yuanqi: "Show yourself."

Zhang Ye was startled, then replied: "I'm here."

"Did you write those songs for The Clown?"

Zhang Ye gulped.

"He just sent me two songs and I've taken a look at them. I think they're really good, so tell me the truth, did you write all of his songs for him?"

Zhang Ye played dumb. "Nope."

"Are you friends with The Clown? Are you two on very good terms? I have to spend so much effort just to get you to write me a song, yet you've written so many of them for The Clown in such a short period of time?"

Zhang Ye laughed and typed: "It's really not me."

"He invited me to appear as his celebrity guest partner in the grand finals."

"Oh, is that so?"

"What are your views on that?"

"I don't know. Go if you like, don't go if you don't want to."

"When will you write another two songs for me?"

Zhang Ye coughed. "Let's talk about that some other time."

"Who exactly is The Clown?"

"I'd like to know as well."

Zhang Yuanqi said stiffly: "Alright, I'm off."

Zhang Ye typed: "Bye."

Afterwards, Zhang Ye continued to wait. He was really unsure if he could invite Zhang Yuanqi, so he could only try to do it this way. If it really didn't work, at most he would just go ahead and

reveal his identity to her. Based on his relationship with Old Zhang and his reputation, he believed that he would still be able to convince her to join him on the show.

In the afternoon, Fang Weihong's call finally arrived.

Fang Weihong immediately spoke when the call connected: "Is it convenient to ask about your identity?"

"Can I keep it a secret for now?"

"It's like this: You should know that with Sister Zhang's status, she doesn't usually take part in competitive variety shows. Although you're good at singing and Sister Zhang also lacks some good duet songs, but..."

"I know that."

"That's why I'd like to ask you about your identity. Sister Zhang's exact words were: If it were any of my better friends, I'd definitely help out. But if this is just a case of working together, then..."

"Is that how it is?"

"Do you know Sister Zhang?"

"...I know her."

"Are you close with her?"

"...I am."

On the other end of the line, Fang Weihong was surprised by this response.

They really knew each other?

And they're even quite close?

Fang Weihong was a little unsure. She couldn't just take the other party's words at face value as this was not a trivial matter, after all. So she asked: "Sorry for asking you so abruptly, but what does Sister Zhang like to drink?"

The Clown answered: "...Wine."

Fang Weihong was taken aback: "She seldom drinks."

The Clown said: "She often drinks."

Fang Weihong fell silent. Zhang Yuanqi had always been guarded whenever she was in the public eye and was the same even among her normal friends. As such, there were some things about her that no one would know from the news or hearsay from the industry. There really weren't many people who knew that Old Zhang liked to drink, and Fang Weihong was one of the few who did. So when Fang Weihong realized that The Clown did not fall for her trick when she tried to fool him, she understood that The Clown really knew about this!

She was sure of it!

This person definitely knew Sister Zhang well!

Who was he?

Just who could it be?

Fang Weihong wanted to ask, but hesitated and eventually stifled her curiosity. "Alright, I understand. I'll communicate this to Sister Zhang, so wait for my news."

"OK, thank you."

Chapter 1065: Mysterious partners!

On the other end.

After hanging up, Fang Weihong called Zhang Yuanqi.

Zhang Yuanqi was running in her home gym. When she saw her phone ringing, she stopped the treadmill and used a towel to wipe away her sweat before tossing it aside. Then she picked up the phone. She was clearly very curious about The Clown's identity and why he had thought of inviting her to be his guest partner.

"Sister Zhang."

"Did you find out who he is?"

"I didn't manage to find out anything as he didn't want to tell."

"Oh."

"But he knows you."

"How well does he know me?"

"He should be a friend of yours and seems pretty close to you."

"Oh? Did he claim so himself?"

"When I tested him by asking what drinks you liked, he said that you liked to drink wine. But when I tried to fool him by claiming that you don't drink, he didn't fall for it."

"...Pretty close to me?"

"That's for sure. How many people know that you like to drink daily?"

"Not many."

"Is there anyone who matches up with The Clown?"

"No one who can sing as well as him."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

"Then who could he be!"

"I've got no idea."

"Then what about the King of Masked Singers' grand finals? Will you go?"

"Give me The Clown's contact number."

"Are you really planning on going?"

"Hur hur, I should do him this favor since he's an old friend of mine. I wanna see him when he shows his face at the venue. I want to see just which friend of mine can sing so well yet keep this secret so well hidden."

They hung up.

Zhang Yuanqi kept quiet for a long while before she turned to look for pen and paper. She flipped her planner open to a blank page and scribbled some names on it. Then she shook her head and crossed them out. She wrote down another two names but shook her head and crossed them out as well.

...

The next day.

Beijing Television.

The set for the rehearsal had already been arranged for. Han Qi and some of the program team staff were currently waiting there, with the band also standing by. They were just waiting for the leads to arrive now.

This was not the original recording studio but a bigger set that was arranged for separately and could accommodate more than a thousand audience members. The stage had been redesigned, and it looked much more magnificent than the previous one. It incorporated a lot more advanced equipment that had been designed to the highest standards as specified by the program team. The live broadcast set was specially designed for the show.

Beijing Television had started planning for it ever since they'd known the King of Masked Singers premiere episode's viewership rating. To ensure that the show would be produced to perfection, they invested a lot into it regardless of the cost. They had been very "lowkey" in the variety show industry for far too long. As it was not easy for them to get this chance to change things, the station definitely didn't want to miss this opportunity!

Hu Fei walked over. "Are they here yet?"

Han Qi checked her watch. "They should be here soon!"

"Who could The Clown have invited as his guest partner?" Dafei asked curiously.

Han Qi smiled wryly. "I don't know. Teacher Clown didn't say."

Xiao Lu said, "We'll find out in a while when they arrive."

The Clown was the first to arrive. As usual, he was already in his costume with his mask on.

Then, just a few minutes later, The Clown's celebrity guest partner arrived. She walked up to them with her high heels click-clacking. When they heard that and looked to her, all they could see was a person in a red mask!

Hu Fei was taken aback.

The program team staff blinked in surprise.

Zhang Ye disguised his voice and said, "You're here?"

A woman's voice came from beneath the mask. "Yes."

Zhang Ye noticed that Old Zhang had also deliberately lowered the tone of her vocal register. If he didn't know who she was, he probably wouldn't have been able to figure out her identity.

Hu Fei greeted, "Hello, I'm the executive director of King of Masked Singers, Hu Fei."

The masked woman shook hands with him. "Hello."

Hu Fei said, "Can I ask? Who might you be?"

The masked woman said, "I'm not anyone famous, so I won't be giving my name."

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes.

You're not famous?

Even if we don't mention this stage, are there any celebrities who are more famous than you in the entire country?

Dafei said, "Then how should we address you?"

The masked woman thought for a moment before answering with a laugh, "Just call me Wild Rose."

Wild Rose?

The title of that song sung by The Clown?

Hu Fei asked, "Then when can we begin rehearsing?"

Wild Rose said, "Anytime."

Hu Fei looked to the person standing next to her. "Teacher Clown?"

The Clown said, "Anytime."

Hu Fei said, "Alright, let's get started then."

Han Qi immediately led them inside. "Teachers, this way please." She was studying Wild Rose so intensely that she kept looking at her every now and then. But even after looking for a long time, she still could not guess who she was. Not famous? Unwilling to give her name? Afraid that no one would recognize her? Could Teacher Clown really be what the netizens claimed him to be? That he was just lying about himself being a B-list celebrity? So he didn't actually know any famous celebrities? And so got a rando to be his guest partner?

The Miracle Wheels band was already waiting for them.

As well as Music Director Bai Yuanfei, several professional

musicians, and piano teachers.

The Clown handed the music score to the band and then gave them some instructions. Following, Wild Rose also went over to communicate with the band for a bit. She listed one by one the things she needed for some parts of the song regarding the rhythm and pauses. At this point, everyone still did not know how Wild Rose would sing.

Then the rehearsal began.

When she opened her mouth to sing, everyone in the studio was stunned!

The Clown was the first to begin.

Wild Rose followed after him.

Everyone already knew that The Clown's singing was very good. As a result, they expected that even if The Clown's invited guest partner was not famous or might even be a newcomer, her singing would surely not be too bad either. But nobody expected that Wild Rose would give such an earth-shattering performance. When she sang, her voice stunned everyone!

They only needed to rehearse it once!

It was flawless!

It was so professional!

After they exited the stage, Xiao Lu rushed up to The Clown and asked, "Teacher, who is she?"

The Clown smiled and said, "If she doesn't want to say, I must keep it a secret as well."

Xiao Lu asked with wide eyes, "Is she really an unknown female singer?"

The Clown did not say anything.

Next to them, Dafei added, "Many newcomers have really good

singing nowadays. It's just that there's either no opportunity for them or they only have average looks, so they can't get famous. In reality, there's plenty of people who can sing very well in our country."

Xiao Lu said, "Oh, so that's why."

But Xiao Lu still felt that this woman did not look like a newcomer from any angle!

I'm not well-educated, so please don't try to fool me!

The Clown asked, "Is the melody alright?"

Bai Yuanfei said, "Yes!"

Hu Fei nodded. "It's quite good."

The Clown said, "Then we're good?"

"Yes!" Hu Fei approved of it and said, "I'm looking forward to your two's performance on the night of the finale. Oh right, there's still the second song. Would you like to rehearse it later as well?"

"Sure," The Clown said.

When Wild Rose heard, she said, "I have something to do. If it's alright, I'd like to leave."

Hu Fei was stunned. Why was she in such a hurry? What was so important? Didn't she just arrive a bit ago?

But Zhang Ye knew that she was indeed a busy person. It was quite flattering that she took an hour out of her day to rehearse with him. He said, "Thank you very much."

Wild Rose laughed. "You owe me a favor."

Zhang Ye said, "OK, I'll be sure to return the favor."

"I'm leaving now." Wild Rose turned around and left without saying anything more.

The program team staff looked at Wild Rose's receding figure, then at The Clown. They felt that these two people were a little

strange. They were at this stage, so surely there wasn't a need to hide who they were, was there? Weren't they trying too hard to maintain their mysteriousness? They kept themselves so secretive that not even the program team staff knew who they were. How could they go about the promotions now? Hai, they were still hoping to analyze and deduce The Clown's identity based on his invited celebrity guest partner. If they knew who his friend was and which circle they belonged to, his identity should get more obvious as the possibilities would be reduced even further. But it looked like they had overthought things. Since it was like this, they could only respect the contestants not wanting to reveal their identities. There wasn't much they could say about it. The competition's grand finals would be in another few days anyway, so they could still find out when the time came for them to take off their masks. They were also very curious about the identities of this pair of mysterious partners!

Chapter 1066: The grand finals arrive!

The grand finals were approaching.

The huge promotional campaign for King of Masked Singers was also in its final stages. Whether it was television commercials, online video hosting site advertisements, newspapers, or advertorials, they spared no efforts in the show's advertising.

The discussions online were also in full swing.

"Have you guys seen the new promo?"

"I've seen it, I've seen it!"

"Haha, Sunset Glow's invited celebrity guest partner looks so familiar!"

"The Clown's partner has been decided as well!"

"Why was The Clown's guest partner skimmed over with just one line?"

"Yeah, there wasn't even a back revealed or the likes, nothing at all. What's going on here?"

"The exact words used were 'invited a mysterious guest partner.' Who is this mysterious guest partner? There weren't even any words like 'heavyweight' or 'famous' attached to the introductory lines."

"Could it be that the guest partner isn't someone famous?"

"That might be possible."

"Damn, could our resourceful netizens really have guessed right?"

"Is The Clown really not that famous? Are all the people that he knows just C or D-list celebrities? That's why they didn't even know how to write the introduction and just used 'mysterious guest partner' instead? And simply gloss over it?"

"Surely not, right? I was still looking forward to it quite a bit."

"Then that'd be really bad for The Clown."

"That really is bad. If the guest partner is not someone famous, how can fight for the throne of the Masked King?"

"If this is how it is, then I expect Petal Shower to win even more."

"I'm more optimistic about Sunset Glow's chances!"

"I'm Flowing Time's braindead fan!"

"The overall situation is indeed disadvantageous for The Clown. Although 'The Internationale' brought him a great deal of popularity and supporters, there are also many people who do not like the song. The controversy surrounding it is pretty big."

...

Back at home.

Call after call came in.

Zhang Ye had not been slacking these past two days. Many people were looking for him, mostly for the same reason.

His old colleague, Ha Qiqi.

"Director Zhang, can you get us a few tickets?"

"How many do you need?"

"Our group from the Central TV Documentary Channel would all like to go, so they've appointed me as the representative to ask you about it. I guess about a dozen tickets or so should be enough."

"Sure, that won't be a problem."

"Thanks, Director Zhang."

Then it was his relatives' turn to call.

"Little Ye."

"Oh, Third Uncle."

"A few of my colleagues would like to attend the grand finals of King of Masked Singers. Can you get us a few tickets?"

"Of course."

"Just three tickets would suffice."

"Sure, I'll get them for you."

Finally, even Dong Shanshan came looking for him.

"Zhang'er, help me to reserve five tickets, alright?"

"Damn, you're the host and you're asking me?"

"Hur hur, the tickets for the grand finals are too sought after, with so many people waiting to get one. I can get one or two tickets, but five's too difficult. You have greater influence than me in the program team, so do me this favor, please?"

"Sure, I got it."

"I'll treat you to dinner some other time."

"You keep saying that, but I've never been treated by you before."

"I'll definitely treat you this time."

"Alright, I'll take your word for it."

After handling these trivial matters, Zhang Ye went back to practicing his songs.

He had been practicing the songs he lined up for the grand finals for two full days. For this reason, he even deliberately found a place where no one could disturb him, leaving early in the morning and only coming home late at night. He tirelessly practiced over and over again until he had lost count of the number of times he had sung them. However, he still felt that it was unsatisfactory and even practiced until he nearly lost his voice. Only then did he quickly stop and rest for a while. After eating some instant noodles, he thought about it again and finally realized where the problem lay.

It wasn't that he didn't sing well!

It was just that Zhang Yuanqi had sung too well!

Having eaten all those Singing Skill Experience Books, Zhang Ye thought that he had become invincible by now and would not be inferior to anyone else when it came to singing. But after listening to Zhang Yuanqi's sample of the song, he realized that he was the frog in the well. Actually, even if Zhang Ye were to compare himself to the likes of Petal Shower and Chen Guang, he still probably couldn't sing better than them. He might be a little better in certain areas, but there were also many areas that he did not do as well as them. Zhang Yuanqi's singing had shocked him plenty and made Zhang Ye feel that he couldn't hold the stage alongside her. This was his stage to begin with, but with Old Zhang supporting his act and after hearing a sample of her singing, Zhang Ye knew that he would become the support act instead if it stayed this way. Other people might not be able to hear it, but he could feel it. This definitely wouldn't do!

What should he do?

He couldn't ask Old Zhang to sing badly on purpose, could he? That would be such a loss of face!

The only way was to raise his own level. The grand finals would only be held this once and there was only going to be one winner to speak of. It was even a live broadcast, so Zhang Ye definitely had to give it his all!

He immediately brought up the game ring's virtual screen. He had so many Reputation Points now that he could just use them as he liked. He didn't have to worry about not having enough for now.

He activated the Lucky Halo (Upgraded)!

-100,000!

-100,000!

He immediately tapped on Lottery Draw (One)!

Additional Stakes: 500!

The wheel began to rotate!

The needle started moving!

One revolution...

Two revolutions...

Three revolutions...

It stopped in the Skills Category region.

The Treasure Chests (Small) appeared.

[Musical Arrangement Skill Experience Book] × 501.

Musical arrangement?

He received this item from the lottery draw?

Zhang Ye was taken aback but was still pretty satisfied with it. In the past, the arrangement his songs mostly followed were the original arrangement of the songs in his previous world. There were some slight variations, but there wasn't too much. His songs were still mainly based on the arrangement he listened to, and he needed to adhere to the opinions of the band. After all, Zhang Ye was not a professional in this field, so there were some arrangements he could only leave to the band and music director to decide. If he could arrange his own songs, then things would definitely be different. He would be able to experiment more daringly and freely by adding in all the aspects that he liked. Being able to arrange his own music would also make the songs better suited to his style and allow him to perform them even better!

This was good stuff!

He was going to eat it!

Zhang Ye started studying the books one by one.

Next, he began his second round of the lottery draw.

He added an additional stake of 500 just like before.

The Lucky Halo (Upgraded) was once again activated as well!

One revolution...

Two revolutions...

The needle came to a stop!

It was the Skills Category region again!

[Singing Skill Experience Book] × 501: Enhances the player's singing technique.

He had received this skill experience book before, the exact same one. It was precisely because of this skill experience book that Zhang Ye was able to make a qualitative leap in his singing, and it was exactly what he needed most right now as well.

Zhang Ye immediately started studying them without hesitation.

He had received 500 books last time and 501 books this time. It wasn't until he "ate" the last book that a system message sounded from the game ring!

He had maxed out on the skill!

There was no way to learn any more!

This was a similar case like the Fruits of Strength and Fruits of Stamina, of which 1,000 Fruits were the maximum amount he could eat. As he could not learn from that last skill experience book, it could only go to waste.

After he deactivated the Lucky Halo, Zhang Ye immediately gave it a try. He tried singing that song again, which he had sung so many times that he was starting to get sick of it. As expected, the effect was entirely different now. Even Zhang Ye himself was surprised at this, although the improvement in his singing was not as obvious as after the first time he had eaten the books. Because, as he gained more of the skill, the effect of the skill experience book would become less obvious. But no matter what, they were still 500 books and they effectively maxed out his level for this item gained from Lottery Draw (One). It was still an improvement,

albeit a minor one. Moreover, Zhang Ye's singing skill that had been upgraded was not just in one single aspect. It included improvements to his portamento, technique, breathing, etc. This was considered an overall upgrade! Everything related to his singing skills were improved!

He stayed up for yet another night.

Trying out his singing.

Arranging the music.

Repeating it over and over again.

Then continuing to practice the songs.

Eventually, his parents could no longer look on.

"Little Ye, you must take a break. What are you doing that's keeping you up night after night?" His mother said, "Why are you risking your life like that?"

Zhang Ye laughed. "I'm helping someone write a song. Don't worry about me. Just go to sleep, Mom and Dad."

His father pointed to the sky outside. "Your mom and I have already had enough sleep. Look at what time it is. It's light out."

Zhang Ye replied perfunctorily, "OK, I'll go to bed in a bit."

His mother nagged, "Quickly!"

"I know." Zhang Ye buried himself into his work again.

The fellow always behaved this way. He always wanted to do his work to his very best, or at least to the best of his abilities. Otherwise, he would keep doing it over and over, repeating it until he got it perfect. Perhaps he was a perfectionist deep down. Further, this grand finals were extremely important to him.

It wasn't until the day before the grand finals that Zhang Ye managed to complete things. He had a meeting with Old Zhang over the phone, as well as with Bai Yuanfei and the band

afterwards.

Bai Yuanfei was astonished. "Did you arrange the music all by yourself?"

Zhang Ye said: "It's not too bad, right?"

"This is something that even the most professional arrangers would barely be able to do, don't you think? How about the dance choreography and costume effects, have you thought about those yet? I think the duet between you and Wild Rose can have a little more visual effect. I can reveal to you that the other contestants have all given considerable thought to effects like visual presentation and fog machines. It's going to have a great visual impact for sure. I'm not really well-versed in this area, but we have professionals who can help you design something on our team, do you want to—"

"That's not for me," Zhang Ye laughed. "I'll just sing normally."

Bai Yuanfei said: "But you'd be disadvantaged for sure."

Zhang Ye said: "It's fine. I don't like all those fanciful effects anyway."

Bai Yuanfei said: "Alright, I understand."

"You have my gratitude for all your hard work."

With this, Zhang Ye was fully prepared for the grand finals!

Chapter 1067: The live broadcast begins!

Saturday.

On the day of the grand finals.

Though it was only a bit after three o'clock in the afternoon, large groups of people were already lining up outside of Beijing Television. Some of them were distributing bottled water, some were distributing clothes, while others were distributing LED lightboards. Everyone was behaving in a very orderly manner as they began preparations to show support for their favorite contestants tonight!

"Where are Teacher Flowing Time's fans?"

"Gather over here, please!"

"Fans of Petal Shower, come quickly. We're distributing clothes over here!"

"Everyone, let's standardize our outfits to show our support for Little Sunset (Sunset Glow)!"

"Are there any fans of Teacher Clown around? You guys can get free bottles of water over here!"

"There are still three available LED lightboards for King of Oddity. Are any of you going to be seated in the front rows? Those who are seated near the front rows, please come and get one. Since the cameras focus there, those who are seated at the back, please don't take the LED lightboards."

"King of Oddity posted on Weibo that if he can gain a spot in the top three, he would sign autographs for his fans at the venue after the competition ends. Everyone will get one!"

"Ah? Are you serious?"

"Then how many will he have to sign?"

"Teacher Flowing Time posted that if he gets crowned as the

grand champion on King of Masked Singers, he'll move up his new album's release date and hold a fan meeting with everyone this week. He's hoping that everyone can give him their support and vote for him!"

"I've already instructed everyone at home to vote for Flowing Time tonight!"

"Sunset Glow has also been canvassing for votes in advance. She started a lottery on Weibo two days ago! That's how I got my admission pass for today. Someone even won the latest model of a laptop!"

"The celebs have all poured in a lot of money for this!"

"Yeah, the celebrities are all trying their best to get votes."

"Only The Clown's Weibo has been inactive. He never posted anything!"

"Damn, why isn't Teacher Clown asking for votes?"

"Who knows!"

"As they said, he's probably not very famous and the celebrity guest partner he's invited should also be quite an unknown newcomer, so why isn't he worried? All the more he should be asking for votes in advance!"

At the live broadcast venue.

The program staff were having a hectic time.

"Check the equipment again!"

"There's a bit of a problem with Camera 5!"

"Equipment team, handle it!"

"There's only three hours left!"

"Are the contestants and their celebrity guest partners here yet?"

"They're all here except for The Clown's celebrity guest partner!"

"Wild Rose isn't here yet?"

"Not yet."

All the contestants had arrived in advance along with their guest partners.

However, The Clown's celebrity guest partner was the exception. By rights, everyone should have already reached the venue since this was such an important live broadcast event. But Wild Rose was still nowhere to be seen, and they were only missing her presence as of now.

Han Qi rushed to find The Clown. "Where's your partner?"

The Clown said evenly, "She has a busy schedule. Don't worry."

Han Qi didn't know how to react. "You're really calm, aren't you? Could you call her and hurry her up? There's not much time left."

The Clown shook his head. "There's no need."

He understood Old Zhang quite well as she was the same type of person as him. Since she had agreed to do something, she would definitely do it well. So there was no need to hurry her. After knowing each other for some time, there was some trust between them.

A distance away.

Flowing Time and King of Oddity overheard.

Flowing Time said, "Only The Clown's partner isn't here yet?"

Flowing Time's partner sneered, "What's with this diva behavior? We're rehearsing soon. Is she going to make all of us wait for her?"

In a room close by.

King of Oddity was also not too happy to hear this. "What's going to happen now? Are we going to go ahead with the rehearsal?"

The program team employee said, "We're not going to wait. Let's

rehearse."

King of Oddity's partner smacked his lips and said, "These newbies are behaving too ridiculously!"

Just as he said that, the program team received an update: Wild Rose has arrived!

The rehearsal began!

In reality, it was not really a rehearsal but simply something for everyone to go through the motions to find their positions. For example, they had to know where the cameras were located and where to stand when they went up onstage. They had to run through the general process once.

The contestants and celebrity guest partners gathered next to the stage all at once.

When Zhang Ye saw Sunset Glow, Petal Shower, and Spinach, he nodded at them in greeting. Then he glanced at the partners beside them. Although they were all wearing masks, their figures looked very familiar. The other contestants and their partners also exchanged greetings as they scrutinized each other. Zhang Ye was naturally one of those whom everyone had their focus on. Many of the contestants and their partners were sizing him up.

Then Wild Rose finally arrived, late.

Flowing Time's partner glanced at her and shook his head slightly.

Petal Shower looked at Wild Rose and blinked several times.

Even though she was late, Wild Rose showed no timidity at all. Instead, she smiled gracefully. "I'm sorry. I got caught in a traffic jam on the way here. Let's get started."

Dafei said, "Alright. Now that everyone is here, we can begin the rehearsal!"

Sunset Glow and her partner were also looking at Wild Rose with

eyes full of speculation.

Was she really a newcomer?

She didn't look like it!

Her voice sounded somewhat familiar?

But it also felt like she had deliberately changed the tone of her vocal register?

If she was a newcomer, why would she need to deliberately change her voice? Was she afraid that someone would recognize her?

...

The sky was gradually getting darker.

The time for the grand finals was approaching.

Zhang Ye's parents and several of his relatives also came to attend the recording and were currently lining up with their admission passes. The audience members were already getting admitted into the venue. They were verifying their admission passes and performing security checks at the front gate.

His mother exclaimed, "Why are there so many people?"

His eldest sister smiled and said, "It's the King of Masked Singers' grand finals, and it's even going to be broadcast live, so of course there's going to be a lot of people."

His third sister called out, "Why are the people up ahead not moving? I can't wait!"

His third uncle said, "What are you so anxious for? We'll definitely get in."

His third aunt said, "It's not like the seats will run away. Be patient."

Almost all of Zhang Ye's family members were here today. If not for his grandparents' legs being not as strong as before, coupled

with their high blood pressure making them unable to be in crowded places for long, the two seniors would probably have come as well.

Not far away, Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, Little Wang, and the others were also standing in line.

"It's so hot."

"It's not our turn yet?"

"The security check is taking too long."

"Let's patiently wait. If it wasn't for Director Zhang, we wouldn't have even gotten the tickets. How many people do you think have a chance to watch the grand finals at the venue? We're very fortunate."

This was the King of Masked Singers' grand finals!

It was a feast for the music and television show industry!

Attention from the industry insiders, the entertainment industry, the entire country's audience, and even the authorities were all focused here tonight!

...

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

His grandpa and grandma turned on the television.

"Has it started yet?"

"Not yet."

...

His paternal aunt's house.

His paternal elder cousin and her best friend who ran a blogshop together had been waiting at their TV for a long time.

"Who do you like?"

"I like all of them."

"I only like The Clown, hehe."

...

At Peking University.

Many Peking University students who weren't on break yet were using the Internet in their dormitories to access the live broadcast on the television station's website. Some students even brought back a TV set from somewhere and hooked it up to an antenna to watch the live broadcast.

"It's about to begin!"

"Hurry and tell everyone!"

"I have a TV in my dorm. Whoever wants to come here and watch, hurry up!"

"We must support the show that was produced by Professor Zhang!"

...

The audience was shown in!

The stage was ready!

The countdown to recording had begun!

It was getting more and more rowdy online!

"There is only one show tonight—King of Masked Singers!"

"It's starting, it's starting!"

"Supporting Petal Shower!"

"I love Sunset Glow the most!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Let's go, The Clown!"

"Every one of them has a chance of winning tonight!"

"I'm looking forward to the crowning of the grand champion of King of Masked Singers!"

At 8 PM.

Under everyone's attention, the live broadcast of King of Masked Singers' finale began!

Chapter 1068: Spinach in the lead!

The live broadcast signal came on!

Dong Shanshan appeared on the television screen!

Amid the cheering and screaming, Dong Shanshan descended from above. She was, in fact, sitting on a platform that was being lowered from the rafters. The stage was covered with fog and mesmerizing lights were shining. "Welcome to the King of Masked Singers, brought to you exclusively by Bright Fruit Cocoa. We're in the theater of the live broadcast of tonight's finale, and I am your most lovable, beautiful, sexy, and slightly artistic host—Dong Shanshan!"

A burst of opening remarks.

The audience's applause thundered!

Countless people were waving their LED lightboards and screaming in excitement!

Dong Shanshan's current popularity was much different from before. On the LED lightboards the live audience members were holding up today, other than for the contestants, many had Dong Shanshan's name on them. Some people were attending the event today just to support Dong Shanshan. They were all her diehard fans!

The platform was finally lowered down onto the stage.

Dong Shanshan elegantly walked off it and said as she strode onstage, "It's the night of the grand finals, and we'll see the most exciting battle between experts in this theater tonight. The grand champion of King of Masked Singers will emerge here tonight. The rules of the competition are very simple: The winners and losers will be decided by our live viewers. When the competition begins proper, the contestant's number to vote for will be displayed onscreen. Cast your votes and choose your grand champion so that

they may be crowned Masked King tonight!"

The venue was changed.

The stage setup was also changed.

Zhang Xia was seated in the audience in the first row.

Chen Guang, Amy, Wang Zhuishu, and the other judges were also seated in the audience. For tonight's live broadcast, they were not tasked with commenting and were only here to watch the show.

The competition's rules for the grand finals had long since been leaked. The result of today's competition was no longer just for the live audience to decide, but for all viewers. The voting channel would be opened right from the first performance of the first round. Whichever contestant placed last in the celebrity guest partner round would immediately get eliminated and not be able to advance to the next round. Voting would only close after the last contestant performed their song in the second round. The contestant with the highest number of votes at the end would then be crowned Masked King, and the results for the first and second rounds were equally important as the votes were cumulative. Further, the program team had planned for a segment during which the contestants could take off their masks at any time between the first and second rounds, meaning they could reveal their identities without needing to wait until the end of the show to do so!

A King of Masked Singers' discussion thread was created on Weibo.

"They're about to begin!"

"Who'll perform first?"

"They go according to the number of times that they've been crowned Masked King."

"Then the first person should be Spinach? She gained entry via the revival round and came in third."

"Who do you guys think will be eliminated in the first round?"

"Other than Petal Shower and The Clown, I think everyone else is in danger of being eliminated!"

"Haha, place your bets!"

"The betting's open! I'll bet on Flowing Time getting eliminated!"

"My bet is on Spinach."

At the venue.

The competition had not yet begun, but the atmosphere was exploding and chaotic!

Zhang Ye's parents, his uncles and aunts, as well as everyone else were all influenced by this atmosphere!

Dong Shanshan announced loudly, "As of now, the voting channels are open. Let's welcome today's first performer onstage—Spinach! And her guest partner—Celery!"

Dong Shanshan immediately exited the stage.

The onstage lights switched to a different style.

The audience was also very cooperative as they immediately turned quiet.

Suddenly, a voice singing in a cappella rang out!

Spinach stepped out onto the stage!

"You said the snow was pure.

"I said the skies were dark."

Another woman's voice followed.

"I said our dreams were forever green.

"You said your soul was gray."

This song became very popular in the past two years and was one of the top ten most requested songs during karaoke. But when it was performed by the two of them, it sounded like it upstaged the

original. They actually added some operatic elements into it and the song seemed to have a heavy feel of Peking opera to it. It was especially enjoyable to listen to.

The dancers came out onto the stage, all of them dressed like Peking opera singers!

This was a classic example of a "traditional meets modern" performance!

Old Zhang had already gone to change into her costume. Zhang Ye was watching the TV alone in his waiting room and nodded approvingly. He rather liked this song that Spinach was performing today.

All of a sudden, without any warning.

Spinach's partner was sustaining a high note when she ripped off her mask!

When the audience managed to react, they were stunned!

Chen Guang pointed to the stage. "Han Ke?"

Zhang Xia smiled. "That's my old friend's granddaughter!"

Han Ke, a C-list celebrity and the granddaughter of Han Aiguo, a famous singer of the older generation in China. Han Aiguo was on the same level as Zhang Xia and a friend of hers who debuted together with her. At the same time, Han Aiguo and Liao Yiqi's grandfather were good friends of many years, so Han Ke and Liao Yiqi practically grew up together as best friends. This was why no one found it unexpected that Han Ke would be on the stage today, even though they were surprised!

Spinach smiled and also took off her mask. In fact, she had already taken off her mask, and everyone knew who she was already. But when her face was unmasked, the audience still cheered her on with screams and applause!

The viewers watching their TVs at home were also very excited!

"It's Han Ke!"

"Han Ke really came onto the show?"

"They're no doubt childhood friends! How supportive!"

"I like Han Ke a lot!"

"She was a child star, and I especially liked those TV dramas that she acted in when she was young! She's still as pretty even after growing up! I'm fairly sure it's only because of Liao Yiqi that she's here. If it were anyone else, she probably would not agree to come onto the show as a celebrity guest! After all, she hasn't sung for the past one or two years!"

"Let's vote!"

"Right, let's quickly vote!"

"Vote for Spinach!"

"I'm going to vote for Spinach just because of Han Ke!"

"Haha, I'm doing this for Han Ke too!"

At the bottom of the screen, the tally was being calculated and displayed in real-time.

In an instant, Spinach's tally had jumped to the top—with 870,000 votes and almost breaking a million! Meanwhile, the remaining contestants who had not yet performed also received some votes, although they didn't get much.

The live audience was shouting.

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Han Ke!"

"Han Ke!"

The duo of Spinach and Celery was really not to be underestimated.

When it came to the end of their song, Spinach's tally had reached 990,000 votes. She was in first place for the time being with a rather eye-catching result!

Dong Shanshan came back onto the stage. "Hello, Little Liao. Hello, Little Han."

Han Ke raised her microphone. As she had already taken off her mask, the backstage crew switched off the voice transformer on her microphone. She greeted Shanshan with her real voice, "Hello, Sister Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Long time no see."

Han Ke giggled and said, "Yeah, Sister Shanshan has become even more beautiful."

The two of them clearly knew each other. In the past, they had both done an endorsement for the same product and filmed a commercial for it. Sometimes, this was just how small the industry was.

Dong Shanshan said happily, "So you're here tonight to support your best friend?"

Han Ke nodded and looked at the audience. She said, "When Little Liao called me about this, I was actually filming outside of Beijing. After she told me the details, I rushed back without another word. It goes without saying I would've come back even if the sky was falling."

This episode, once a duo finished performing, they were allowed to say some words onstage. They could either have a short chat or canvass for votes; anything was fine. It was not as restrictive as the past episodes. However, Spinach and Celery did not really talk about anything else. Perhaps they were embarrassed about asking for votes, so the two of them just bowed to the audience and left the stage after a few words.

Chapter 1069: Out of control grand finals!

In the front row.

Zhang Xia commented, "Little Liao sang very well today."

Chen Guang also said, "Yeah, she really did quite well."

Amy laughed and said, "Ever since the revival round, Spinach has transformed into another person. It's like she's suddenly been enlightened. She's a surefire favorite to win today."

Wang Zhuishu said, "I think she'll do well too."

On the last stage, Spinach's popularity was not considered particularly high. At the least, it was quite far off from Petal Shower and The Clown's level of popularity. But ever since the revival round, Spinach had started to really accumulate a good deal of popularity and left an impression on many in the audience. They all started to like her. Although the celebrity guest partner Spinach had invited was not that famous and was just a C-list artist like herself, they sang the song wonderfully.

Following their performance, the next contestant came out!

The second person to take the stage was Sunset Glow!

By rights, Sunset Glow should have appeared much later. After all, she had been crowned the Masked King once. Although she wouldn't have gotten a better spot in the appearance order than The Clown, she could still have chosen between appearing as the second to last or third to last contestant. But as she probably had some considerations regarding her song and the atmosphere in the studio, Sunset Glow chose to be the second contestant to go on stage.

On the stage, a familiar tune started playing!

Zhang Ye also found it very familiar. It turned out to be "Super Star"!

The audience was screaming.

"This song?"

"Sunset Glow is really that singer?"

"This song is the best!"

"Where's her celebrity guest partner?"

"Yeah, where's the celebrity guest partner?"

There was only Sunset Glow onstage.

The masked Sunset Glow raised her microphone and sang.

"Praising your smile,

"Your knitted brows break my heart.

"I cannot notice me,

"I only feel what you feel."

Suddenly, the stage was covered in fog!

With a loud rumble, all the lights went out!

When the lights came back on, another masked woman had appeared onstage. When she opened her mouth to sing, the theater was stunned for a moment before erupting into thunderous applause!

"Wherever you go,

"Bring my soul along with you.

"It's captured in your spell,

"What use is leaving it?"

Her celebrity guest partner had taken the stage as well!

This voice sounded all too familiar!

Zhang Ye smiled.

Zhang Xia smiled.

Many of the audience members knew this voice as well!

But what was even more surprising was yet to come. The lights went out again, with only a few columns of light remaining. The effect was especially artistic.

Vaguely, Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, and the others discovered someone standing up beside them.

The audience also saw this. From out of the blue, Amy had taken out a mask and worn it over her face, then strode forward and made her way up onto the stage as well. With a smile, she stood alongside Sunset Glow and the other celebrity guest partner!

Their three voices chorused in unison!

"You're a zap, you're my light, you're my only fairy tale.

"I love just you. You are my super star.

"You decide, I abide. There is nothing better here. Loving just you. You are my super star."

The audience went crazy!

No one had expected that Amy would also go up onstage!

Sunset Glow chose to remove her mask at this point in time. When it was off, the face of someone who looked particularly quiet was revealed—Spring Garden's Li Xiaoxian!

Next to her, one of them removed their mask as well—Amy!

The last person to take off her mask was Sunset Glow's celebrity guest partner—Xiaodong!

All the members of Spring Garden had assembled!

This lineup was a really powerful one!

At their televisions.

The home audience was also taken by surprise.

"It's really Xiaoxian!"

"Sunset Glow is Li Xiaoxian!"

"Damn, for real?"

"I didn't believe it when the netizens analyzed who she might be!"

"I always thought that the singing of Spring Garden's trio was just so-so. They've always sung group songs that talk about lovey-dovey subjects, so I didn't hear anything special. I never expected Li Xiaoxian's singing to be so good! She can also sing good by herself! So this isn't just some pretty girl group; they really have the skills to back themselves up!"

"Vote for her!"

"Yes, vote!"

Spring Garden was the country's most popular girl group with no others coming close. The group was so popular that all of its members were practically B-list celebrities and worth a lot. If the three members were separated individually and looked at, they might not be much. But when these three B-list celebrities joined together, their influence was absolutely comparable to that of an A-list star!

Zhang Ye's three sisters were also screaming and shouting from their seats in the audience.

When they finished singing, the entire place was chanting their names!

Sunset Glow (Li Xiaoxian) lifted her microphone and said, "Thank you. Thank you, everyone. And thank you to my two sisters who are here to support me. I was actually very nervous for today's grand finals, but I feel much better with them standing here with me. Hello, everyone, I am Li Xiaoxian!"

Applause and screams rang out once more!

"Xiaoxian!"

"Xiaoxian!"

"Xiaoxian!"

Li Xiaoxian said, "I really didn't think that there would be so many people who like me." She smiled. "I wasn't confident at all about joining King of Masked Singers, and I felt really perturbed. I was afraid that I would be too embarrassed if I lost, so I didn't let anyone know that I was joining the show at the beginning. I was too scared to tell anyone about it."

Amy grumbled, "You didn't even let me know."

Xiaodong said with a giggle, "You've kept it under wraps quite well."

Li Xiaoxian blinked. "Sorry about that, my sisters."

Xiaodong laughed. "It's fine, you're forgiven." Then she looked at the audience and into the cameras. "Everyone, remember to vote for our dearest Xiaoxian."

Amy suddenly pointed her microphone at the audience. "Did Xiaoxian sing well today?"

The audience was unanimous. "Yes!"

Amy asked, "Should you vote for her?"

The audience replied, "Yes!"

Amy and Xiaodong were trying their best to get votes for Li Xiaoxian.

Everyone noticed that Sunset Glow's tally was currently soaring. It shot up to two million votes, double that of Spinach's tally. She had replaced Spinach and was in first place for the time being!

The third contestant to appear onstage was King of Oddity!

He had revealed his identity already, so everyone knew who he was. But when the crowd saw him coming onstage with his celebrity guest partner, they were still surprised for a bit!

Their costumes were too extravagant!

They were both wearing golden robes!

They were even wearing bejeweled crowns that looked extremely expensive on their heads. These were definitely not provided for by Beijing Television and were probably rented by their talent agencies!

Their song was titled "The King's Sorrow"!

The audience was startled!

"How much did they spend on that?"

"Wow, they're so stunning!"

"I must vote for them just based on their costumes!"

"They're so willing to spend on their outfits!"

"How extravagant!"

"Awesome!"

"This visual impact is so great!"

They began singing. The entire song felt like some sort of stage play with a lot of people taking part in the performance. At times, people would come out for a dance. At other times, a chorus would come out and accompany the main singers!

When they were a minute and a half into the song, King of Oddity's celebrity guest partner took off his mask!

Li Yue!

A famous singer from Hong Kong!

A B-list celebrity!

When her identity was revealed, King of Oddity's tally rocketed up. King of Oddity was not considered a very popular singer in the music industry, or at least was not known as a great singer. However, it was different for Li Yue. She held a lofty position in the pop music scene, and she was very popular and worth a lot!

The song ended.

When Zhang Ye saw King of Oddity's tally, he was startled and frowned a little. King of Oddity had almost managed to catch up to Sunset Glow with over 1.8 million votes now and was already ahead of Spinach by a mile. In truth, Zhang Ye felt that Spinach's group sang the best among the three groups that went first. The song Sunset Glow had sung was not exactly suited for a competition as it did not allow her to showcase her singing skills. As for the King of Oddity's "The King's Sorrow," he sang average. He clearly made several mistakes and his form today was not really that good. But why did the results of the voting turn out this way?

Zhang Ye realized that something was wrong!

This had deviated from the premise of the show!

When King of Oddity and Li Yue started asking for votes, Zhang Ye felt this feeling even stronger!

King of Oddity said, "I hope that everyone can vote for me. Thank you."

Li Yue smiled and said, "King of Oddity's next album is about to get released, and the album will be titled King of Oddity. Although he doesn't want me to reveal too much, I still want to say this."

King of Oddity looked at her and tugged at her.

However, Li Yue insisted on speaking. "He has decided that all the proceeds for the King of Oddity album will be donated to charity, which will be used to aid children. When I heard about it, I felt really touched. For a singer who is so kind-hearted, he totally deserves your votes!"

King of Oddity quickly waved it off. "I'm just doing something that's within my power."

The applause from the live audience wouldn't end!

"Donating everything?"

"Is he serious?"

"King of Oddity is such a kind-hearted person!"

"Yeah, he definitely deserves praise!"

"It's rare that a celebrity can be so charitable. There really aren't many like him!"

"That's so nice of him!"

"Supporting King of Oddity!"

"Just by that commitment of his, I must support him!"

"How generous!"

But there were also doubters.

"Wasn't there some negative news coverage about King of Oddity some years ago? Something about him verbally abusing a reporter after drinking? Cussing out a waiter? He even beat someone up in the past? What's with this about donating his album sales to charity now? What's with him making this declaration on this occasion? Is he trying to get more people to vote for him? Why do I find him so pretentious?"

"Those are just rumors. How can you believe all that?"

"King of Oddity is a very nice person. He's willing to donate all of his album's proceeds. Why don't you do the same if you can!"

"Passerby transforming into a fan!"

Zhang Ye had also heard of that news regarding King of Oddity. He did not know if they were true, but at least on today's stage, King of Oddity felt like two different persons on and off stage. His talk and attitude were entirely different, and that left Zhang Ye unable to distinguish how he really was. In his opinion, it was a good thing to contribute to charitable causes. But to use that as a tactic to ask for votes on this occasion, it didn't seem to be in good taste!

Meanwhile, King of Oddity's tally kept climbing!

Right after he announced that he would be donating to charity, his tally shot above Sunset Glow's!

Over 2.3 million votes!

King of Oddity was in first place!

And his tally was still continuing to rise!

Hu Fei was very happy.

The program team's staff were also beaming.

This was because they were constantly receiving news updates of the show's viewership rating and the constantly increasing number of people tuning into the show. So they were not exactly bothered by these developments.

Only Zhang Ye fell silent.

He suddenly thought that he should have intervened in the competition's grand finals format and rules, and that he should have participated more actively in the show's production.

It seemed out of control now!

The tallies no longer had anything to do with the performance itself!

Whoever invited the more popular celebrity guest partner?

Whoever had the more extravagant costume?

Whoever gave the most touching speech?

All of that would decide who would get the most votes?

This was not the original vision that King of Masked Singers had!

Chapter 1070: The Clown's turn to take the stage!

At TVs.

There were numerous sets of eyes focused on Beijing Television.

"King of Oddity is first, while Sunset Glow and Spinach are second and third, respectively!"

"This is so intense!"

"Did King of Oddity really sing that well? How is his tally so high?"

"He did say that he would donate to charity, after all!"

"Isn't that way of canvassing for votes a little disingenuous of him?"

"Yeah, it's too phony. But people still buy into it!"

"I don't like King of Oddity's way of canvassing for votes. If we're talking purely about the songs, Liao Yiqi (Spinach) should be in first place! If not, it should be Sunset Glow instead!"

Many people understood how things ought to be.

But more people who were confused seemed to be around.

Some people did not care about what you did and only cared about what you said. If you said it well and put it beautifully, claiming to do all sorts of extravagant things, then everyone would think that you were good. Furthermore, King of Oddity's outfit was indeed overly extravagant and his invited guest partner was also a big name B-lister. Coupled with his declaration to donate to charity, it was completely within reason that he had such a tally. But as for how he had performed, it probably did not matter any longer.

However, when it came to the next contestant's turn, a lot of

people finally understood what it meant when people said that there was always someone who could do something better!

...

The next contestant to appear was Flowing Time!

He was the famous Hokkien singer—Zhao Qiquan!

Flowing Time sang one of his own Hokkien songs but the lyrics had been changed by him. His part in the song was sung in Hokkien but his partner's portion was sung in Mandarin! His partner's singing was not very good and could even be considered amateur. He barely managed to stay on-key, although his intonation wasn't too bad overall. His singing voice was also fine but if it were really to be assessed, then it couldn't be considered good at all. Anyone could come along and probably sing more professionally than him.

At the beginning, the audience was even feeling somewhat disappointed.

But when they came to the end of the song, Flowing Time's guest partner ripped off his mask!

With that, the audience became so excited that they jumped to their feet!

"Holy shit!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"It's Jiang Hanwei!"

"Old Jiang got invited onto the show?"

"Indeed! Flowing Time has well-connected friends in the entertainment industry!"

"Even Old Jiang is here?"

"Damn, there's really an A-lister on the show!"

"Yeah, I heard someone mention it before. I thought it was just a

rumor!"

"King of Masked Singers has finally managed to invite an A-lister!"

"This is so awesome!"

"Old Jiang sings pretty good!"

Jiang Hanwei!

A famous martial arts star!

The number one star of martial arts movies!

A famous A-lister from China!

Jiang Hanwei had sung the theme songs for his movies before, but he was not a true singer and only did so in the capacity of a guest or as a side job. So he wasn't going to be a complete professional at singing. However, his popularity was still a force to be reckoned with. In fact, he probably did not even need to sing. He could just show his face and the votes would still come in! Zhao Qiquan did not have this kind of influence. His popularity was not considered to be that widespread, but it was different for Jiang Hanwei. He was a true-blue A-list celebrity who was not ranked at the bottom of the A-list rankings!

"Let's vote!"

"There's no need to think any further! Let's just vote for Flowing Time!"

"I'm Old Jiang's diehard fan!"

"Old Jiang must be the most famous celebrity among all the invited guest partners!"

After they finished singing.

Dong Shanshan went back onstage. "I had not expected that Teacher Jiang would be here."

Jiang Hanwei laughed loudly as he clapped Zhao Qiquan on the

shoulder. "I had to come and give my support since this old friend of mine invited me. Everyone, please remember to vote for Old Zhao and vote generously. If Old Zhao is crowned as the grand champion of King of Masked Singers, I promise to reveal Old Zhao's wife to everyone!"

Flowing Time gave a wry smile. "Must you be so hard on me?"

Dong Shanshan was surprised. "Teacher Zhao got married?"

Flowing Time coughed, "Yes."

Be it the live audience or the people watching on TV, all of them flew into an uproar!

"What?"

"Didn't Old Zhao get divorced just the year before last?"

"He got married again?"

"With who?"

"Why wasn't there any news about it?"

"Holy shit, what the hell have the paparazzi been doing?"

"Hurry up and tell us! Who is Old Zhao's wife?"

Jiang Hanwei suddenly added, "Haha, I can divulge this right now: Old Zhao's wife is also a celebrity, and you all definitely know who she is!"

All at once, everyone's curiosity was piqued!

Jiang Hanwei said with a laugh, "I promise on Old Zhao's behalf that as long as he gets crowned as the grand champion, I'll expose her to the world! May I do that, Old Zhao?"

Flowing Time said helplessly, "Alright, alright, I give."

The media present at the venue went on high alert!

Jiang Hanwei shouted, "Hurry up and vote. I'll be counting on all of you!"

Flowing Time bowed slightly as he went off the stage with Old Jiang.

The audience at the venue was screaming nonstop.

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

There was hardly anyone shouting Flowing Time's name. Most of them were directed at Jiang Hanwei. No one present today had not watched Jiang Hanwei's movies before. Almost everyone here was a fan of his!

Immediately, the TV audience started voting!

500,000!

1 million!

2 million!

3 million!

Flowing Time's tally went over 3 million votes!

He had firmly taken first place!

He was far ahead of everyone else!

Zhang Xia laughed and said, "This Old Jiang really knows how to get the votes."

Amy had returned to her seat by now. "He's in first?"

Wang Zhuishu suddenly looked to his left and right. "Eh, where's Old Chen?"

"I don't know. He was still around just a while ago." Chen Yidong was also puzzled.

The next minute, they were surprised to see a familiar figure appearing on stage. This person was wearing the same outfit as Chen Guang had when he was seated beside them earlier. The only

difference was that he was now wearing a mask!

It was time for the next group's performance!

They were "Petal Shower" and "Humble Light"!

Petal Shower sang, "Why aren't you leaving yet?"

The Humble Light faced her and sang, "I wanna watch the sea with you here."

This was a song by Chen Guang and Fan Wenli!

It was originally a duet sung by them!

By this point, the audience knew who they were even if they had not yet taken their masks off!

Petal Shower was Fan Wenli!

Humble Light was Chen Guang!

"I guessed long ago that it was Old Fan!"

"It's really her!"

"I like her! I really, really like her!"

"I knew it had to be her!"

"Hahahaha, Old Chen is a judge!"

"Giving the couple who perform together a Like!"

"Their singing is wonderful!"

"Old Chen and Old Fan are so impressive!"

"The two biggest names in the music industry have joined together, and they're even a couple with great understanding. On this stage, who else besides The Clown will be a match for this pair?"

"Even The Clown might not be able to beat them!"

"Right, The Clown's invited guest partner seems like a newcomer."

The performance ended!

Everyone stood up and applauded them!

Dong Shanshan walked onto the stage with a smile. "So Petal Shower's actually Teacher Fan Wenli! No wonder you sang so well. I am a fan of yours."

Fan Wenli smiled and said, "Thank you, Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan looked at Chen Guang. "Teacher Chen has always been a judge on the guessing panel. I understand that the program team had also invited you to join the competition, so why didn't you choose to participate?"

Chen Guang chuckled. "I was considering it, but my wife told me out of the blue one day that she was going to compete on King of Masked Singers to challenge herself. I thought it was better that I didn't join since I was really afraid that it would be too embarrassing if I lost to her on the show."

The audience was tickled!

They chatted for a while but did not ask for any votes.

Chen Guang and Fan Wenli had always been like this. Even if you requested that they shout "quickly vote for me" to the television audience, they would not do it.

When Zhang Ye saw their tally, he frowned again.

Flowing Time was still in first place with 3.8 million votes.

King of Oddity was in second place with 3 million votes.

Petal Shower had taken over third place with 2.9 million votes.

The audience was stunned.

"How can this be?"

"She's only in third place?"

"Old Chen and Old Fan sang so well!"

"Yeah, this song should be the best sung one today, followed by Spinach's song. But why is Petal Shower merely in third place? And why is Spinach in last place?"

"Was it simply because she did not ask for people to vote for her?"

"It shouldn't be like this."

"I didn't vote for Petal Shower because I already knew that she was Fan Wenli and guessed that Chen Guang would be her guest partner. Their performance had nothing to look forward to!"

"Yeah, there was more to look forward to in Flowing Time's performance. Who could his wife be?"

"No one was able to guess who Flowing Time's and King of Oddity's guest partners were!"

"Petal Shower and the others were given too much attention during the course of the competition. So there's nothing fresh and exciting to look forward to with them."

"But Petal Shower sang really well!"

"The other contestants publicized performing charitable acts or exposing their love life. They even invited some big names and spared no efforts in canvassing for votes, so how could Petal Shower and Spinach possibly compete with them? There's nothing wrong with these tallies. If they really want to catch up in the rankings, there's still a chance to do so in the second round where they'll be performing solo!"

"Hopefully, Petal Shower can catch up. I feel that she deserves to become the grand champion!"

A lot of people were very surprised by this tally.

Including Zhang Ye, who was quite unhappy.

If Petal Shower and Spinach had truly sung badly, he likely could have accepted this. But the issue here was that both of them had sung outstandingly. From a professional point of view, they were

the two groups who had performed the best today. Hence, Zhang Ye could not accept that they were not higher in the rankings!

It was his turn next!

It was time for him to take the stage!

Chapter 1071: '[Love of a Lifetime](#)'!

In the waiting area.

Dafei quickly said, "Teacher, it's your turn."

The Clown nodded. "OK."

Xiao Lu asked Wild Rose, "Are you ready?"

"Yes," Wild Rose answered plainly.

As per procedure, Xiao Lu reminded them, "Teachers, you must not get nervous later no matter what. Cameras 2 and 3 are located at the front and the two of you must face the cameras at all times, although you shouldn't look into them. Eh, where are the in-ear monitors?" The program team staff and she were treating Wild Rose like she was a real newcomer.

The Clown said, "I don't need it."

Wild Rose said, "I don't need it either."

Xiao Lu gasped. "All, alright then."

Singers who usually sang in a recording studio would be used to wearing an in-ear monitor. A lot of singers who performed live were also used to wearing them as they were still very effective for listening to their own voices and the music. This gave a better effect and also prevented a desynchronization in the singing with the rhythm of the song. After all, the propagation of sound in such a large venue was usually delayed, so if their awareness of it was not that sharp, a problem would arise where the singing and music were not in sync. Only those singers who were especially professional and adept at live performances would not require such earpieces.

Wild Rose was clearly the latter.

While Zhang Ye was an exception—because this fellow did not know how to use a earpiece at all. Whether it was in the past or

right now, he had never worn one in the first place.

It was almost time to take the stage.

The Clown's tally was still at the very bottom with only 200,000 votes. This was because the others had finished performing. He was the only one who had not gone onstage to perform, so his tally was naturally in last place.

Dong Shanshan's voice sounded.

"Next up, let's welcome the last pair of contestants."

"The Clown!"

"Wild Rose!"

Cheers erupted!

Many people were waiting for this last pair of contestants!

"It's time for The Clown's performance!"

"It's finally his turn!"

"Both Sunset Glow and Petal Shower have revealed themselves. There's only him left now!"

"Yeah, it's only The Clown's identity that we don't know!"

"Hurry up and show yourself!"

"I'd also like to see who on earth his partner is!"

"Is it really a newcomer?"

"Even if they're not a newcomer, they shouldn't be a very well-known celebrity, right?"

His mother sat up straight. "It's The Clown's turn!"

His third sister's eyes were glimmering. "I was waiting for him."

Ha Qiqi said, "I've always liked The Clown."

Zhang Zuo said, "Haha, I also like him quite a bit."

There were also countless viewers staring fixedly at their

televisions!

After Fan Wenli and Li Xiaoxian finished performing, they returned to their seats offstage and were looking up in wait for the start of The Clown's performance. They were also anticipating the reveal of his identity as no one could guess who The Clown was all this while! As all the others had revealed themselves, their guess was that The Clown was also likely reveal himself to increase his tally in the first round. If he did not put in more effort in the first round to help close the gap, then it would definitely be very difficult to catch up later!

The fog machine was turned on

The stage was covered in fog. Nothing on it could be seen.

At the same time, the music started playing. It was a little sad and ethereal.

After the fog dissipated, The Clown was standing at center stage. He was by himself.

Listening to the melody, Zhang Ye closed his eyes and reminisced about the times with Old Zhang. He experienced a rather complex mix of emotions. The first time he met Old Zhang was two years ago. He could still remember with great clarity how Sister Zhang looked very cheerful and friendly on television back then. She was kind and pleasant to everyone and never put on any airs. Zhang Ye believed it to be real at the time. In the end, someone pressed his doorbell that night. When he opened the door and took a look, Zhang Yuanqi was standing right there at his apartment's door. She spoke in a cold manner and was even drunk. Thinking of it, Zhang Ye found it hilarious and his impression of Old Zhang as a female goddess was shattered on the spot. Since then, the two of them had become good friends. Whenever Old Zhang had time, she would come over to drink wine with him and tell him about things she could not tell others.

Sometimes, Zhang Ye questioned himself as to whether or not he

liked Old Zhang.

He didn't know.

He probably did like her, right?

If Old Wu had not agreed to be his girlfriend or if Old Wu had not appeared in his life, he was unsure if he would've tried to woo Old Zhang. Sometimes, fate was really unpredictable. So when he learned that Zhang Yuanqi was going to sing a duet with him, the first song that came mind was this song. Zhang Ye wanted to sing this song with her even though she did not know that The Clown was him. He just really wanted to sing it!

He opened his eyes [and raised his microphone](#).

"The past has passed and won't return to now.

"Scarlet leaves long buried in the dirt."

Wild Rose was the first person to be taken aback. When the two of them were rehearsing earlier, The Clown did not sound like he did now!

Zhang Xia was also shocked by his voice. Why did she feel that The Clown's singing was even better than before?!

A Cantonese song?

He chose a Cantonese song?

Those two lines pulled the audience into the music!

The audience could feel inexplicable sorrow and seemed to see an image of life and death!

"The start and end can't be changed, anyhow.

"My faraway lover drifting beyond the clouds."

He jumped an octave up.

"The sea of woes rolls with love and hate.

"It's hard to escape this world's fate."

Zhang Ye reached into the distance to grasp at something but was unable to grab anything.

"In love, but each other we must avert.

"Perhaps I should believe this is fate."

There was no applause!

There were no cheers!

Everyone in the audience was carefully controlling their breathing lest they affected him and the song!

Zhang Xia sighed, "This is what you call singing!"

When Wang Zhuishu heard Zhang Xia's comment and realized it implied something more, he could not help but glance at her.

Yes, this was what singing was about. The King of Oddity's and Flowing Time's performances could only be called performances, while The Clown's performance was what one would call real singing!

It was overwhelming!

This was a real singer who did not need to add any gimmicks into his performance!

All of a sudden, a woman's voice sounded from afar.

"Ahhh, ahhh."

The audience turned their heads in surprise!

Wild Rose had appeared behind the audience and was standing on an elevated platform. As she sang, her eyes stayed on the stage while she walked over to it step by step.

Her voice was amazing!

A single vocalization covered countless people in goosebumps!

Some of the audience members probably thought that it sounded nice but did not feel anything more. However, there were many

professionals present here today and a lot of them were stunned by this singing!

Zhang Xia got quite the fright. "Who is she?"

Fan Wenli broke out in a cold sweat. "Th-This is..."

Chen Guang, Xiaodong, Li Xiaoxian, Amy, and the others were also shocked. This voice, this singing, this breathing technique! Even the fluctuation of the intensity in her emotions was successfully conveyed within her vocalization!

This was good beyond measure!

Just who did The Clown invite?

Their fellow peers in the music industry were also dumbfounded watching their televisions!

Just The Clown alone was astonishing enough!

And now, there was another person like that in Wild Rose?

These two were fucking exceptional singers!

How could the others have a chance with these two singing together?

The Clown looked toward Wild Rose. "Lovers, once gone, never shall come back."

Wild Rose sang softly, "Disappearing love."

The Clown closed his eyes. "Sitting alone, I stare past this world all slack."

Wild Rose was nearing the stage. "Hope to see you again."

"Though the flower may wither."

Wild Rose sang sadly, "Wishing only..."

"It will bloom back."

Wild Rose looked at The Clown. "For you."

"The love of my life seems to be..."

"Waiting..."

"Beyond the clouds."

Wild Rose sang, "I hope."

Wild Rose walked onto the stage!

The two of them were facing each other, no more than five meters apart!

Their voices suddenly harmonized.

"The sea of woes rolls with love and hate!

"It's hard to escape this world's fate!"

The two of them walked toward each other slowly and reached their hands out at the same time. It was like they were trying to grab hold of each other's hands, yet when their fingertips came within touching distance, Wild Rose's hand trembled with hesitation as she withdrew it.

The Clown reached further out toward her, then clenched his fist as he started withdrawing his hand as well.

Despite being at such close proximity!

They couldn't close the distance between them!

These few centimeters felt like the furthest distance in the world!

Now they closed their eyes.

"In love, but each other we must avert.

"Perhaps I should believe this is fate.

"The sea of woes rolls with love and hate.

"It's hard to escape this world's fate.

"In love, but each other we must avert.

"Perhaps I should believe this is fate."

A lot of people were deeply engrossed in the song!

This was the charm of music. The song had given many people a vivid experience of a life and death romance in just three minutes, hooking them in and never letting go!

Yao Jiancai asked anxiously, "Who the heck is she!"

Beside him, Zhang Xia said in astonishment, "This voice sounds really familiar!"

Fan Wenli looked over and said, "I also find her voice very familiar!"

Xiaodong exclaimed, "It can't be, it can't be her, right?"

Chen Guang could guess who Xiaodong was referring to. "That's impossible. Who here is qualified enough to invite her? With her status, would she come and compete?"

Fan Wenli said, "The song's too short! I can't truly identify who she is by her voice!"

Amy yelled, "Why are they still not showing themselves? The suspense is killing me!"

The audience suddenly shouted.

"Ah!"

"She's going to take off her mask!"

"She's about to take it off!"

"Who could it be?"

"Who is this woman?"

A lot of people opened their eyes wide in curiosity!

Because at the final moment when the song was coming to an end, Wild Rose placed her hand on her mask and was very close to revealing her mysterious identity!

But unfortunately, her hand stopped right there.

Because The Clown had walked up to her and given her a slight

shake of his head.

Wild Rose did not say anything but dropped her hand.

The audience regretted this deeply.

"Aiyo!"

"Take your mask off already!"

"Why isn't she taking it off anymore?"

"What's going on?"

"She was about to take off her mask!"

"Why is she not taking off her mask? Everyone else has revealed themselves!"

"What is The Clown thinking?"

"Does he really intend to wear the mask for the entire duration of the competition?"

"Damn, isn't he overdoing it by a little too much?"

"They're still not going to reveal themselves? I'm just afraid that when they get eliminated after the first round, they won't even have a chance to show who they are even if they want to! This is the best time to show themselves and ask for votes!"

Chapter 1072: I'm a newcomer!

In the audience.

Zhang Ye's father sighed, "What a nice song this is."

His mother said, "This woman sang really well!"

His eldest sister was shocked. "Yeah, who is she?"

His third sister anxiously said, "I don't know! Why didn't she take off her mask?"

"The Clown stopped her!" His second sister slapped her thigh and exclaimed, "This song is so good! It didn't feel fake, nor was there much flamboyance to it. It was purely singing. It was so damn awesome!"

A duet and a solo were two different concepts. They were completely different!

The difficulty of singing a duet lay in the cooperation between the singers and the "control" of the atmosphere. In fact, the majority of duets were not suited for competitive singing. As such, some of the contestants before them chose to make use of musical instruments to control the atmosphere by putting on electronica the moment they went onstage and using it to pump up the atmosphere. Some others chose to use their performances to control the atmosphere by wearing resplendent outfits like they were staging a play, and adding a dance segment to give the audience a stronger visual impact! But The Clown and Wild Rose's song was all about controlling the stage with their voices and using their singing to excite the audience! This was clearly much more difficult, as even the husband and wife pair of Chen Guang and Fan Wenli could not cooperate to this level in their earlier performance!

The music ended.

The audience were at a loss for a moment, then suddenly erupted

into applause!

Hearing the applause and seeing everyone around them standing up from their seats, Zhang Ye was having fun singing. He felt fulfilled with his performance today and could claim to have sung to perfection. He managed to use his own style to sing all that he wanted to say and express. Furthermore, Wild Rose's partnership with him was even better. The two of them seemingly had an unspoken understanding of each other even though their characters and approach to handling things were totally different. For some reason, they resonated very well together on a spiritual and artistic level. Perhaps this was why these two people who were from two completely different worlds could end up as the good friends they were.

Voice?

Rhythm?

Cooperation?

They were flawless in all aspects!

This was a very famous classic from Zhang Ye's previous world called "Love of a Lifetime" that was used as the theme song of A Chinese Odyssey. Zhang Ye had heard of it when he was young but did not have any strong feelings about it. However, when the song was used in the movie, it brought out a different side to the song that sounded quite good. However, he had never had the urge to sing this song. It wasn't until the grand finals when he invited Wild Rose to be his partner that Zhang Ye suddenly thought of this song. It was like it had infected him—he really wanted to sing it. For this reason, Zhang Ye stayed up many nights just to practice the pronunciation of this song's Cantonese lyrics so that he could sing it today! Thinking about it now, it was worth all the effort he put in. He did not fail this song regardless of how the results would turn out.

Dong Shanshan walked back onto the stage with a smile. "Hello,

teachers."

The Clown and Wild Rose both smiled.

With the live broadcast camera in front of them, the attention of the entire country's audience was focused on them.

Dong Shanshan looked at them and said, "I don't know how I should greet the two of you right now, because you two have yet to reveal your identities, so I wouldn't know who you are."

Wild Rose smiled as she raised her microphone and said, "I was planning to reveal my face."

Because she did not take off her mask, the vocoder on her microphone was still on.

Curious, Dong Shanshan asked, "Then why didn't you?"

Wild Rose laughed and said, "You have to ask him."

Dong Shanshan looked at The Clown. "Oh?"

The Clown did not answer.

In fact, Zhang Ye and Wild Rose had communicated about this issue beforehand. She was not too inclined to take off her mask during the performance itself as she did not want to destroy the artistic integrity of the performance, which Zhang Ye agreed with. So the two of them did not plan to take off their masks from the start. Zhang Ye did not know why Wild Rose would suddenly change her mind about this. Perhaps she was afraid that he would lose out too much in the voting, but Zhang Ye managed to stop her from doing so. On this stage, Zhang Ye's only intended to sing well. He knew that if Wild Rose had taken off her mask, the competition would probably end early with Zhang Ye gaining a great advantage. But that was not what he wanted.

He wanted to win!

He wanted to win fair and square!

Comparing popularity?

Comparing acting chops?

Comparing misery?

Comparing charitability?

What was the meaning in that!

Zhang Ye did not wish for his show that he brought over from his previous world to become like this!

So The Clown raised his microphone to his mouth as he looked to the singer next to him. "Today, I would like to thank Teacher Wild Rose for taking time off to support me. My deepest gratitude." The vocoder made him sound very strange.

Wild Rose laughed and said, "That's what friends are for."

The Clown looked at the audience. "Next, I would like to thank my parents and family. They're also here today, but I wonder if they liked my song."

Dong Shanshan said in surprise, "Oh? Aunt and uncle are here too?"

Hu Fei, who was giving instructions offstage, was stunned.

Dafei and Xiao Lu were also a little taken aback.

What?

The Clown's family members are here?

That's impossible! The Clown did not request for any admission passes to the grand finals from them!

All the admission passes that were given out had gone through their hands, so they naturally wouldn't remember wrong. Many of the contestants' relatives were attending the grand finals today, like Spinach's aunt and uncle, King of Oddity's mother, and Li Xiaoxian's siblings. The program team had allocated the best tickets for them and arranged for them to be seated in the front rows. However, The Clown's family members were definitely not

included in this list!

Hu Fei asked Dafei, "Did you give them passes?"

Dafei replied, "I didn't."

"Little Han, did you give them passes?"

Han Qi stuttered, "It wasn't me either! I don't know anything!"

A lot of people in the audience started looking around!

"The Clown's parents?"

"Who are they?"

"Who are his parents?"

"We should be able to figure out his identity if we can spot them!"

"Where are they?"

Zhang Ye's parents were also searching.

His mother turned to check behind her and to the sides. "There's no one?"

His eldest sister also searched for a long time. "No one stood up."

His father wondered, "Are his parents seated in the front row?"

His mother stretched her neck to have a look. "They're not up front either."

At this time, Dong Shanshan questioned, "Teacher Clown, Teacher Wild Rose, I believe that there are many people who are curious about who you are, including me. In five minutes' time, the voting channels will be suspended. Are the both of you really not planning to reveal your faces and let everyone see who you really are?"

The Clown said, "It's not necessary."

Dong Shanshan blinked. "Then do you want to ask for votes?"

The Clown calmly said, "It's not necessary."

Dong Shanshan did not know what else to say. "Th-Then alright, we will respect the teachers' choice. Let's have them head backstage for a short break. We'll return after these messages."

The TVs cut to commercial break.

Dong Shanshan was sweating from the stage lights as they were too hot. She immediately went offstage to get her makeup touched up. Three makeup artists ran over to assist her. The other members of the staff quickly tidied up the stage.

When they were heading off the stage, Wild Rose, who was walking ahead of The Clown, asked without even looking back, "Are we really not going to reveal our identities?"

The Clown made a noise in the affirmative.

"Not going to ask for votes?"

"No."

"You know, this song was never suitable for a competition."

"I know."

"What if we lose?"

"I'll accept it."

Wild Rose suddenly laughed. She turned around and looked at him for several seconds. "I finally believe that you're really my old friend. I don't have many friends with a temperament like yours. I think I know who you are now, although I'm not very sure because the person I know shouldn't know how to sing."

The Clown spread his hands, not replying.

The staff led them to the front row.

Fan Wenli, Chen Guang, Li Xiaoxian, Xiaodong, Jiang Hanwei, Zhang Xia, and the others were all seated there. This special zone was reserved for the contestants and judges. When the two of them came over, all the contestants and judges stared at them en masse

as they took their seats beside them.

Amy spoke up the fastest. "Big Sis, who are you?"

Wild Rose looked at her and chuckled, "Guess."

Flowing Time (Zhao Qiquan) said, "You should have taken your mask off."

King of Oddity agreed, "Yeah."

Wild Rose acknowledged him.

Jiang Hanwei asked suspiciously, "Do we know each other?"

Wild Rose purposely disguised her voice and said, "No, I'm a newcomer."

You're a newcomer?

How is that possible!

The singers nearby nearly fainted!

Especially Flowing Time and the other veteran contestants. They were even more at a loss for words. Damn, if you are a newcomer, then aren't we dead meat?

Chapter 1073: The Clown on the verge of elimination?

During the commercial break.

Some of the audience took a bathroom break.

Some of the staff made use of this time to check the equipment.

Li Xiaoxian (Sunset Glow) looked at Wild Rose, who was seated beside The Clown, and asked, "Big Sis, do you know who The Clown is?"

Wild Rose smiled and said, "I don't know, but I have someone in mind."

Xiaodong quickly asked, "Oh? Who?"

Fan Wenli added, "Do we know him?"

Wild Rose glanced at The Clown, then looked back at them. "Hur hur, the person I'm thinking of, you guys definitely know him. Also, I think you should be quite familiar with him."

When The Clown heard that, his eyebrows twitched a little.

Amy exclaimed, "Surely not, right? We're very familiar with him?"

Fan Wenli said with a frown, "Why do I have no memory of someone like that?"

Zhang Xia said, "Just who could it be?"

Wild Rose laughed and said, "It's only a guess. I might be wrong."

Chen Guang didn't know how to react. "If you're not even sure of who The Clown is, why did you agree to come in support?"

Wild Rose smiled without saying another word.

The others could not figure out if she was telling the truth or lying.

Liao Yiqi (Spinach) had not said anything all this time. Her celebrity guest partner, Celery, was talking her ear off, probably worried about her current tally of votes. After all, the numbers were not really ideal.

The host finished touching up her makeup.

The program team counted down to the return of the show.

Three...

Two...

One...

The commercial break was over. The show's broadcast signal came back on!

Dong Shanshan beamed as she announced, "Welcome back to tonight's finale of King of Masked Singers." She pointed down. "At the bottom of your screens, you can see the numbers to call for each contestant. Please support and vote for your favorite contestant so that they might become tonight's Masked King. Your votes decide if they will remain or leave after the first round. The contestant that comes in last won't continue competing tonight. Only five will remain in the battle for the Masked King in the next round. And now that our six contestants have all finished performing, let's bring the real-time tallies up onto the big screen behind me and have a look at the current rankings."

In an instant, the entire venue went quiet.

The TV audience also seemed to be holding their breath!

Spinach looked up!

Fan Wenli took a deep breath.

Flowing Time and Jiang Hanwei were smiling so widely they were squinting.

King of Oddity looked relaxed as he knew he would be safe from elimination with his current tally.

"Who's in first?"

"I don't know."

"Are the results out yet?"

"Who'll be the first one to get eliminated?"

Zhang Ye also looked up at the screen.

With a sudden flash, the tallies appeared on the big screen and updated in real time. The votes were changing every second as the numbers jumped.

When the audience saw the rankings, there was an uproar in the venue!

First: Flowing Time

Second: King of Oddity

Third: Petal Shower

Fourth: Sunset Glow

Fifth: Spinach

Sixth: The Clown

Fan Wenli said in surprise, "What?"

Zhang Xia couldn't believe it either. "The Clown is sixth? He's in the last place?"

Wild Rose gave The Clown a look.

The Clown did not react.

Amy cried out, "What's with this result?"

Flowing Time shook his head. That's what he gets for acting aloof and not wanting to take off his mask!

King of Oddity was also smiling on the inside. He knew that The Clown had sung very well, and he admitted that the best song that he has heard today was The Clown and Wild Rose's "Love of a Lifetime"! They had indeed sung much better than the other

contestants by far. However, it seemed like that didn't affect anything at all since how many in the audience would look at their performance from a purely professional point of view? Most people just listened and watched the performances for the fun of it. If you did not take off your mask or ask for votes, and chose not to have any gimmicks to interest the audience, then who would want to vote for you?

Xiaodong was also finding it difficult to understand. "Even if The Clown isn't in first place, he shouldn't be in the last place! There was clearly nothing wrong with his song at all!"

Li Xiaoxian frowned and said, "I just cast a vote for Teacher Clown on my phone. He and Teacher Wild Rose really sang this song well, so how could..."

Even Dong Shanshan, who was currently onstage and facing the cameras, looked a bit startled when she saw the rankings. She hadn't expected to see such a result either!

Zhang Ye's mother was enraged. "What the hell!"

His father could not keep watching. "How are these people even voting?"

His eldest young sister said in shock, "The Clown and Wild Rose sang so great! They should be in first place! But why is their tally so low? This is impossible!"

Ha Qiqi gasped. "Isn't that too low?"

Zhang Zuo said, "No one wants to vote for The Clown? I might not be a professional, but even I could hear that The Clown and Wild Rose sang much better than the others!"

Others in the audience held opposing views.

"I'm giving my vote to Flowing Time anyway."

"Me too, I just want to know who his wife is. Hahaha!"

"The Clown and Wild Rose sang well, great, even. But who would

know who they are since they were unwilling to take off their masks? They're probably just some unknown artists who are afraid to show their faces in the first place. Maybe they're scared the audience won't recognize them? Then we might as well give our votes to the celebrities we know. King of Oddity is a good choice to support since he has intents to support charity."

"Right, King of Oddity seems like he has a good character."

"I voted for Zhao Qiquan."

"Likewise, but I'm doing so because I'm giving face to Jiang Hanwei."

"Old Jiang has already done so much to get votes for Flowing Time, so we must definitely give him face! Hehe!"

In the previous episodes of the competition, the contestants were not allowed to speak or ask for votes after their performances, or even take off their masks midway through. There were also no celebrity guest partners at all. But the rules were changed in today's grand finals, and the outcome was clearly very different from before. The program team had not anticipated this, and they also did not think too much of it when Flowing Time and King of Oddity were asking for votes from their supporters. But at this moment, when they saw The Clown's tally, Hu Fei, Hou Ge, and the others suddenly realized that something was not right. This development had gone beyond their expectations and design of the competition format. It had gone utterly off track from their original vision of the competition!

...

In the outside world.

On Weibo.

The fans of the contestants were calling for support and votes everywhere.

"Please vote for Flowing Time! Thank you!"

"Where are King of Oddity's fans? Go vote for him!"

"Let's push King of Oddity up the rankings together! Don't let our big brother fight this battle alone!"

"Where are Old Fan and Old Chen's diehard fans? Let's give our votes to Petal Shower together!"

It was bustling online.

People calling for support everywhere, and some even offered to sell their votes. This was because every phone number could only be used to vote once, so many diehard fans of Flowing Time, King of Oddity, and the others were offering to buy votes for the contestants they supported. Although this behavior was prohibited, it was in fact very difficult to enforce.

Only Spinach and The Clown did not experience much support from their fans.

For Spinach, it was because she was not that well-known. As for The Clown, it was because no one knew who he was.

But there were also fans of The Clown who were very angry.

"Why is he in the last place?"

"The hell!"

"Are they all deaf?"

"Can you people not hear the difference between good and bad?"

"You guys should be voting for The Clown!"

"This is a singing competition! It's not about outdoing each other with gimmicks!"

"Are you kidding me? How can The Clown be last?"

...

At the venue.

Dong Shanshan checked the remaining time. "We're only two

minutes away from the end of the first round."

By now, the front runners were leading by a lot of votes compared to those behind them.

Spinach, fifth place: 1.27 million votes.

The Clown, sixth place: 1.26 million votes.

There were only 11,000 votes between them!

There were still two minutes left!

It would be impossible for them to catch up to those in the lead in such a short time. The eliminated contestant would be either Spinach or The Clown!

Spinach looked toward The Clown and let out a sickly laugh.

The Clown looked at her in return.

Dong Shanshan said, "There's still a minute until voting closes. The voting is getting more and more intense."

The Clown had 1.28 million votes!

Spinach was also at 1.28 million votes!

Their two tallies were tied!

Counting down: ten seconds, five seconds, three seconds...

A lot of people were tensing up with nerves!

All of a sudden, Dong Shanshan announced, "OK, the voting window has closed!"

Instantaneously, the tallies on the big screen stopped changing!

Countless home viewers and the live audience immediately looked at it!

Fifth: The Clown

Sixth: Spinach

The difference between their two tallies was just 220 votes!

Spinach was eliminated and would not advance into the battle round!

Hu Fei heaved a sigh of relief.

Xiao Lu patted her breast. "I was scared to death!"

Han Qi's heart nearly jumped out of her chest. "How close! He nearly got eliminated!" Then she got furious and wondered, How could that have happened? Why did it become like this?

The Clown!

Wild Rose!

How could these two singers nearly get eliminated?

Are all of you deaf? Are all of you so easily deceived by those gimmicks rather than listening to their singing?!

Chapter 1074: The Clown loses his title chances?

The netizens commented on end!

"Spinach was eliminated!"

"The results are out!"

"It was way too close for The Clown!"

"Yeah, he's a favorite to win the title tonight. In fact, he's the favorite to win, so how did he nearly get eliminated in the first round? This doesn't make any sense!"

"Liao Yiqi was eliminated?"

"Damn, I was supporting Spinach!"

"Spinach sang so much better today!"

"Right, Spinach absolutely sang much better than Flowing Time and King of Oddity! At least today, at least this round, Spinach absolutely should not have been eliminated!"

"It's their fault for not trying to get votes."

"Right, I think it was only Spinach and The Clown who didn't canvass for votes!"

"Ai, Spinach was already the contestant with the lowest popularity on this show. It was to her disadvantage as such competitions still depend on one's fame to be successful. I feel so much pity for Spinach!"

"She should have asked for support and votes!"

"Exactly, both her and The Clown miscalculated!"

At the venue.

Dong Shanshan had already announced the results.

She looked down at Spinach from onstage. "We're quite sad and

sorry to see that Teacher Liao Yiqi will be leaving this stage early tonight. Could you say something for everyone before you go?"

Spinach stood up and walked onstage.

Dong Shanshan handed the microphone to her.

Spinach forced a smile. "Thank you, everyone. Getting here, reaching the grand finals, I'm very happy with my performance, really."

In the audience.

Quite a number of Spinach's fans stood up.

"Spinach!"

"Little Qi, we're cheering you on!"

"Cheering you on! You're the best!"

"We love you!"

Some fans were already in tears.

Several grown men were wiping tears away as they held up LED lightboards with Spinach's stage name on it. They were holding them high with all their strength, like they were trying to raise the boards into the sky!

When she saw this, Spinach could no longer control her emotions. Her eyes reddened as she said, "Thank you. Thank you, all of you." Pausing, she bit her lip and said, "I'm sorry that I wasn't able to make it to the end." Spinach was a very cheerful person in private and usually had a lot to say. However, the Spinach on stage was not as talkative as she was in private. Just like before, she did not really touch on how she was feeling even after she had been eliminated, much less complain about anything.

When they heard Spinach apologizing, the fans felt even worse!

A lot of them started crying and their hearts went out to her!

Spinach exited the stage.

The other contestants also left and went backstage to prepare for the next round of the competition. Only Wild Rose, Xiaodong, Chen Guang, Jiang Hanwei, and the other celebrity guest partners remained behind in the audience as they were not involved in the next round of competition. Their work here was done for the day.

Backstage.

The Clown did not say anything on the way over.

Fan Wenli looked at him. "You should have been first in the first round."

Li Xiaoxian was no longer wearing her mask. "We were just discussing that if the results were based only on the songs, you'd definitely have gotten first place."

Flowing Time and King of Oddity did not say anything. They were already heading back to their own waiting rooms to change costumes. Their makeup artists were already waiting for them.

The Clown looked at both Fan Wenli and Li Xiaoxian. "Thanks."

Fan Wenli said, "You'll definitely catch up in the second round."

The Clown chuckled but did not speak.

Fan Wenli and Li Xiaoxian also headed back to their waiting rooms.

The Clown was by himself now. He was just about to open the door and go inside his waiting room when he heard footfalls coming from behind. He turned around to look and saw that it was Liao Yiqi who had come backstage.

"Teacher Clown."

Zhang Ye looked at her. "Teacher Spinach, you're looking for me?"

Liao Yiqi asked, "Did I not sing well?"

Zhang Ye firmly shook his head. "It's not that; you sang great. If

I'd voted, I would not have given my vote to Sunset Glow or Petal Shower. I would have voted for you."

Liao Yiqi said, "Is that so?"

Zhang Ye reaffirmed, "Yes."

Liao Yiqi smiled wanly and said, "Then why are our tallies so low?"

Zhang Ye did not answer her, nor did he know how to answer her.

"I can't accept it," Liao Yiqi suddenly said. "I really can't accept it."

Zhang Ye waited for her to continue.

Liao Yiqi took a deep breath. "I don't have another chance to sing. So Teacher Clown, I'd like you to do me a favor. You must be crowned Masked King. Can you do that for me?"

Zhang Ye said, "With you gone, I'm the one with the lowest tally amongst the five remaining contestants."

Liao Yiqi was silent for a moment. Then she looked up and said, "I'd like to know if there really is no recognition for those of us who just want to sing in peace."

Zhang Ye comforted, "You're still young. There'll still be a lot of chances in the future."

Liao Yiqi said, "But right now, my beliefs have been shaken."

Zhang Ye understood. He knew exactly what Spinach was feeling at this moment. He was furious about her elimination from the competition. He felt that it was unfair and also found it unbelievable. Not counting his duet with Wild Rose, Zhang Ye felt that Spinach's song was the best one out there tonight. Surprisingly, she performed much better than the husband and wife pair of Chen Guang and Fan Wenli. Because of that, Zhang Ye did not know how he could comfort her when he was faced with

this young singer who had just come of age.

One second.

Two seconds.

Zhang Ye suddenly spoke, "Don't be shaken. Believe in yourself, and believe in what you have always thought is right."

Liao Yiqi did not say anything. She was hesitating and looked lost.

Zhang Ye looked at her. "About what you've asked of me, I'll give you my word."

Liao Yiqi was startled by his words.

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "So if I become the Masked King, if I become the grand champion, you must promise me that you'll continue to believe. There's nothing wrong with singing in peace, OK?"

Liao Yiqi's eyes finally lit up. "OK!"

Zhang Ye nodded. "Then it's a deal."

Turning around, Zhang Ye pushed open the waiting room door.

Inside, the makeup artists and wardrobe assistant were having a conversation.

The female makeup artist said, "Well, I suppose that's it for The Clown."

The male makeup artist said, "Both he and Spinach acted too high and mighty. I can tell that they're newcomers at a glance. They're still not used to the pace and rules of the entertainment circle. Even though such shows say that they only listen and judge the music, how many people would know how to do that? This current competition format totally depends on the viewers' votes. How many votes can they get with just their singing alone? They definitely have to incorporate other ways to gain more support. Flowing Time and King of Oddity were fine examples of how it

should be done. Their talent agencies must have strategized it for them, using those gimmicks to gain votes that other contestants would have needed to gain with two songs."

The wardrobe assistant sighed and said, "Honestly, The Clown has already fallen out of the race for the Masked King."

The female makeup artist said, "Yeah, the tallies' differences are too large. There's no way he can catch up."

"The Clown has an advantage, though."

"That's right."

"His advantage is that he has not taken his mask off yet. He still has a chance to do so in the second round and gain an explosion of support. But if he insists on keeping his mask on, then he's really done for! He won't even be able to fight for the top three spots!"

The three of them were chatting.

Zhang Ye closed the door behind him.

Only now did they realize that The Clown had come back. They did not know whether he had overheard their conversation, but the three of them looked a little guilty.

"Uh..."

"Teacher Clown."

"Let's do your makeup."

Zhang Ye acknowledged them and sat down at the makeup table without a word!

All of a sudden, he was full of fight. He refused to have his beliefs shaken today!

Chapter 1075: The second round of the grand finals!

The commercial break ended.

The live broadcast cut back to the theater.

After the elimination of Liao Yiqi, the competition entered its climax. The countless domestic viewers watching their televisions could even smell gunpowder in the air. The atmosphere of the competition was intense!

"What a long commercial break!"

"It's starting!"

"Dong Shanshan is so damn beautiful!"

"Her popularity has taken off due to this show."

"True. Dong Shanshan, Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, The Clown, all of them have become really popular!"

"How can you say that The Clown is popular? He was nearly knocked out of the competition!"

"Isn't there still the second round?"

"He won't be able to catch up even in the second round."

"I now believe that The Clown might really be a newcomer."

"Yeah, he doesn't even know the basic rules and behavior of show business."

"Not necessarily. The Clown might know that it'll affect his votes if he doesn't take off his mask, canvass for votes, or let his celebrity guest partner reveal herself, and that it puts him at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, that's what he's chosen to do. Maybe it's in his principles to win fair and square. Could this be a possibility?"

"Get over it."

"Do you think that everyone thinks like that Zhang Ye fellow?"

...

Onstage.

Dong Shanshan looked into the camera and announced, "Welcome back to the show. And now, let's have our staff reopen the voting channels. The second round of the competition has begun!"

In the second round, which was also the final round, only one song remained for each contestant to perform. Their final song would decide their outcome and spot in the competition. Although there was still one more chance to perform alone after being crowned as Masked King, the prerequisite was winning.

The voting channels were opened!

The real-time tallies were shown on the big screen!

First: Flowing Time, 3.51 million votes Second: King of Oddity, 2.68 million votes Third: Petal Shower, 2.35 million votes Fourth: Sunset Glow, 2 million votes Fifth: The Clown, 1.3 million votes

The difference was too great!

The Clown had already fallen behind right at the beginning!

Han Qi kept quiet, a dark look on her face.

Hu Fei was not in a good mood either. He felt that he had done The Clown wrong this time, as well as Spinach. Hu Fei had even purposely gone to look for Spinach to offer his apologies to her a bit ago. The format of this competition was a mistake on their program team's part, and Hu Fei felt that he was responsible. However, Spinach did not seem like she was in the mood to talk. Hu Fei could see that Liao Yiqi had been dealt quite a blow, so he got even more worried about The Clown. He was afraid that he would not be able to withstand this pressure. The Clown was the contestant who had become the Masked King the most times so

far. He was clearly the favorite to win and become the grand champion, yet he had now fallen all the way to the last place. This disparity was too much for anyone to accept!

But there was nothing they could do. The results were set in stone. The Clown had almost no chance of becoming the champion. They couldn't stop the competition now, nor could they change the rules at the last minute. All they could do was let the competition keep progressing!

A nocked arrow must fly!

Beijing Television's Head and several station heads had all come to watch the competition in person and were seated in a remote corner in the theater. After all, this was Beijing Television's most popular variety show in their history of existence. The entire television station's attention was on the team, and everyone had very high hopes for the show.

With Dong Shanshan's announcement, the final round of the competition began!

The audience fell silent!

Li Xiaoxian (Sunset Glow) came onto the stage!

"I've always been told I don't understand lyrics, composing, or singing!

"I've always been told I don't understand comfort, laughter, or living!

"I've always been told I don't understand passion, women, or romance!

"I've always been told I don't understand restraint, flexibility, or smarts!"

It was a rock song!

Sunset Glow was actually singing a rock song!

This song had once been performed by a female contestant on

The Voice. But when it was sung by Li Xiaoxian, the style of the song was entirely different. There was very deep emotion within the singing as Li Xiaoxian used a restrained voice with feminine quiet to sing that rebellious shouting of the rock spirit!

"Who told you I can't sing!"

The entire audience perked up!

Scream after scream rang out!

Xiaodong and Amy gave each other a look and broke out into gratified smiles.

Their Spring Garden group was the most popular girl group in the country, but had always been mired in controversy. A lot of people called their singing into question and believed that they depended on their appearances to be successful. They'd heard so much criticism about themselves over the years but had never been able to give a proper response to those critics. But today, Li Xiaoxian had stepped forward. She had used the identity of Sunset Glow to let everyone know that they could also sing well, and that they could sing songs that people thought they couldn't! More importantly, they could sing well!

When her performance was over, Sunset Glow's vote count immediately soared!

The audience could see the constant change in her tallied votes from the real-time update on the big screen.

It increased by several hundreds of thousands of votes, and she surpassed Petal Shower in the rankings!

Li Xiaoxian's solo song required all of her singing skills that Sunset Glow was well-known for!

The next contestant was King of Oddity!

"Child.

"My child.

"How could I have a future without you?"

"Child.

"My child.

"Dad will wait for your return!"

This was a charity single that had been released for an anti-human trafficking campaign. The original version had ten celebrities singing in it, and two of those ten were currently seated in the audience. One of them was Grandma Zhang Xia, the other was Jiang Hanwei. This was a song many people had heard before, and it immediately evoked a lot of memories.

Frankly, King of Oddity's singing was just average. He specialized in singing portamento, but this technique did not at all suit some songs. However, he had added some complex portamento and pauses into the song that made it sound a little too over the top. Yet somehow, the audience was touched and bought into it!

Before the song ended, King of Oddity's votes had increased by more than 500,000. It shot up by much more than Sunset Glow's increase, and his tally was now nearly even with Flowing Time's!

Some in the audience kept clapping.

"Great song!"

"How nostalgic it is to hear this again!"

"It looks like King of Oddity is really here to help charity today!"

"Yup, that's how all celebrities should be. Everyone should follow King of Oddity's example!"

"Just based on this charity theme song, I will vote for King of Oddity!"

"I've already voted for him, so I can't vote anymore."

During the first round, most of those watching the show had cast their votes. As a result, there wasn't as much of an increase in the

tallies during the second round as compared to the first round where the tallies changed by 1 to 2 million votes per contestant. The uptick of votes for each of them in the second round was only in the region of several hundred thousand. This was expected due to the votes being cast earlier on. This was also the exact reason why all the contestants, other than The Clown, had chosen to take off their masks during the first round. Everyone knew that such a situation would occur, so they took off their masks early on to try to gain an advantage over the others. Otherwise, their chances of winning would have been minimized if they waited until the second round to do so. Unless someone sang an extraordinary song stunningly, there was almost no realistic chance of them bridging the difference in votes. This reason was why the program team and everyone else believed that The Clown had already lost his title chances.

There weren't enough votes!

And it would only lessen toward the end of the show!

...

The tally was constantly changing.

When Li Xiaoxian saw it, she gave a dry laugh.

Xiaodong was speechless. King of Oddity had performed this song about average, but how did he get so many votes? It seemed like Xiaoxian would not even stand a chance of getting placed in the top three.

Zhang Ye had changed into his other costume and had had his makeup done. He watched the TV in the waiting room and shook his head slightly.

This again?

He was playing the charity card again?

He was even starting to overuse this gimmick?

Was there no end to this?

Zhang Ye did not object to charity, so of course he wouldn't oppose it. But to do this on such an occasion, wasn't it too obvious what his objectives were? To put it bluntly, this was as good as moral abduction. He was using means other than singing to get the audience to want to vote for him! Li Xiaoxian had sung great even if she wasn't in her best shape today. She still managed to showcase a large part of her strengths in her performance, yet she did not get as many votes as King of Oddity did?

Immediately, Spinach's words echoed in her mind.

Is there really no recognition for those of us who just want to sing in peace?

Zhang Ye was silent.

Then he clenched his fists tightly!

Chapter 1076: Wild Rose's mask falls off!

King of Oddity stepped down from the stage and returned to his front row seat.

"Congratulations."

"You're guaranteed to finish in the top three."

"If it's close, you might even get first place."

"Haha, your tally will be moving into first place soon."

Jiang Hanwei and a few others offered their congratulations.

King of Oddity was also looking at his own tally. He got very excited knowing that he would be surpassing the first place Flowing Time in a moment. As a singer who was still considered half a newcomer to the industry and not really that popular yet, King of Oddity was pleased to have achieved such results in the King of Masked Singers' grand finals. Sunset Glow had finished performing, so it should be impossible for her to catch up to him. Although The Clown had not yet performed, as his tally was too far behind, he could be left out of consideration for the top three places, in which King of Oddity was pretty much assured a spot!

He might even get second?

There were three divisions in the ranking based on the tallies displayed on the big screen.

The first and second place votes were very close.

The third and fourth place votes were quite similar.

The last rung of the rankings belonged only to The Clown, whose number of votes was falling far behind.

"It's Petal Shower's turn!"

"Let's see how Old Fan does with her song."

"This performance is too important for Old Fan."

"Who will get crowned Masked King?"

"Flowing Time's chances are the best! He's leading by too much in the voting!"

Gradually, the number of people discussing The Clown lessened. Some of those who supported him were left cursing and protesting for him. But as this was a competition, and with the live tallies displayed openly, they had no recourse but to continue watching the competition. Their attention was instead focused onto the battle between Petal Shower, King of Oddity, and Flowing Time.

Fan Wenli went onstage.

Chen Guang was watching her from the seats with a smile.

A lot of people were also watching her in anticipation.

Sure enough, Fan Wenli did not disappoint.

"Piercing lights hang overhead.

"I can hear the calls the crowd led.

"I stand at center stage, the only place I can, endlessly singing with a sweet smile spread.

"The sky is so blue.

"The water is so clear.

"How white the clouds are.

"The people are so kind.

"Love is so pure.

"How beautiful this world is."

All of a sudden, Fan Wenli raised her voice!

"But I don't wanna sing!

"I don't wanna sing today!

"I just wanna let the loneliness eat me away!

"I don't wanna sing!

"I just don't wanna sing!

"Those rotten lyrics that ain't worth a thing!"

The earlier duet had limited much of Fan Wenli's singing from being showcased. But in her solo performance, she was not bound by anything. She was able to let go and put all of her emotions and feelings into her singing. The title of this song was "I Don't Wanna Sing." It was an alternative rock song that Chen Guang wrote in his early days when he was in his most down-and-out period. This song meant a lot to Chen Guang, as well as Fan Wenli.

Zhang Xia stood up and clapped!

Xiaodong, Li Xiaoxian, and Amy also stood up and clapped!

Petal Shower's tally rocketed up!

3.2 million!

3.5 million!

3.6 million!

She surpassed King of Oddity and Flowing Time to take first place!

The rankings instantly changed!

Petal Shower was in first place!

Flowing Time was in second place!

King of Oddity was third!

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

"Great song!"

"Let's go Petal Shower!"

The audience was shouting her name!

Li Xiaoxian (Sunset Glow) was delighted. "Sister Fan will definitely become the champion!" She and The Clown were already out of the race, but she was hoping that Fan Wenli could at least become the champion of this competition. It wasn't that they were both women, or that they had a good personal relationship. It was because Li Xiaoxian felt that Fan Wenli had sung much better than both Flowing Time and King of Oddity!

Yao Jiancai said happily, "Congratulations."

Chen Guang smiled and said, "Old Zhao has not sung yet."

As Flowing Time's guest partner and a friend of many years, Jiang Hanwei chuckled. "Old Zhao still has a killer move lined up for his last song. Just watch."

Zhang Xia said curiously, "Oh?"

Onstage, Dong Shanshan announced, "Let's welcome the next contestant—Flowing Time!"

Flowing Time took the stage.

Soothing music played.

However, what came on over the sound system was not a singing voice but Flowing Time speaking. "Today is the one-hundred-day anniversary of my marriage to my wife. I would like to thank her for staying with me through the most difficult period of my life and encouraging me. I have written a special song for today's grand finals as a present for her."

Hu Fei's face sank!

The program team staff looked at each other!

During the rehearsal, this part was not mentioned, and he was not supposed to have made a speech. Why was he not singing, and instead, using an opening speech to set up the atmosphere? Usually, having speech within a song was fine. It wasn't like it was prohibited. But the program team felt that there was something

very wrong with Flowing Time's speech. He was once again trying to play the emotional card and use it to canvass for more votes. If Flowing Time had mentioned he'd give this speech during the rehearsal, Hu Fei, as the executive director, would definitely not allow him to add it to the performance. But who could have expected that he would resort to a *fait accompli* instead of mentioning it to them in the first place!

Flowing Time sang.

"Dearest wife.

"Please hold me tight.

"Without you, I can't live.

"Without you, I won't survive."

Seated in the audience was Wang Zhuishu, an accomplished professional composer and lyricist. He had written many songs, so when he heard this song and its lyrics, he knew right off the bat that Flowing Time did not really know how to write songs. The lyrics were middling, although the melody was decent.

Zhang Xia glanced at Jiang Hanwei.

Xiaodong, who was sitting quite close to Jiang Hanwei, laughed dryly.

Was this the killer move you mentioned?

This song...

Ai, I'd rather not talk about it.

Jiang Hanwei was an outsider to the music industry, not someone who did music professionally. As such, the professional singers and musicians seated around him did not really say much about this.

But what surprised them was that the audience had actually bought into Flowing Time's gimmick!

Because of that opening speech in which Flowing Time mentioned that he was gifting the song to his wife!

"What a good man!"

"My impression of Flowing Time has changed for the better!"

"It's not easy on him either."

"Yeah, all that bad press about him in the past. Ai, I guess I could let it slide. I should vote for him just for this song of his, or else I won't feel good."

"Flowing Time is quite sentimental!"

"When he got divorced, Old Zhao's ex-wife posted on Weibo alleging that he had beaten her up. I suppose that was just a rumor. Old Zhao has a great character and is also pretty gentle."

"This song sounds really touching."

"Who on earth is his wife?"

"I really wanna find out! Quick, let's vote for him. Didn't Teacher Jiang Hanwei say? As long as Flowing Time becomes the grand champion, he'll reveal the details of their marriage!"

"That's right, that's right!"

The tally kept changing!

Zhang Xia was dumbfounded!

Chen Guang and the others were also stunned!

The song was not over yet, but Flowing Time's tally had caught up to Petal Shower's!

By the time the song was over, he had surpassed her tally with an astonishing 4 million votes. This number made those professional singers and guests' jaws drop. Even Yao Jiancai had to have some admiration for Zhao Qiquan. Although the song was not that good, he really knew how to spice things up to get the votes. His gimmicks kept coming one after another. From his first song

onward, he was in total control of the audience's emotions. He had planned it all out, from start to finish. Clearly, his emotional card had struck a chord with the audience better than King of Oddity's charity card. Most critically, everyone still did not know who his wife was. This anticipation left them wanting more!

After his performance.

Flowing Time came down from the stage.

Jiang Hanwei stood up and gave him a hug. "Haha, you sang well!"

"Thanks." Then Flowing Time walked to Fan Wenli.

Fan Wenli also gave him a hug and smiled.

Li Xiaoxian stood up as well. "Congratulations."

"Thank you." Next, Flowing Time went over to Wild Rose.

Such hugs were quite common to see in theaters. It was a form of congratulations and encouragement.

Flowing Time bent forward a slight bit and already had his arms out.

However, surprising many people, Wild Rose did not even get up from her seat. She just put up a hand. "Don't mind me. You didn't sing too bad. Hurry up and sit."

Flowing Time was taken aback too.

Damn! She was not giving any face to him at all?

The live broadcast cut to Flowing Time's hugs with the other contestant and guests. But in a twist of fate, this moment was captured by the cameras, leaving the cameraman to sweat nervously. He yanked the shot away from them, but that scene had already been seen by everyone. No matter if it was the live audience or the home viewers, everyone was taken aback.

"Pfft!"

"Who is this woman?"

"How face smacking!"

"She's not even returning the gesture to the grand champion?"

"Who are you referring to as the grand champion? The competition hasn't ended yet."

"It's already over, OK?"

"Yeah, the Masked King has already been decided. It's definitely going to be Zhao Qiquan!"

"It doesn't matter whether The Clown goes up on stage or not anymore."

"Hahaha, this Wild Rose is interesting. I'm very curious about who she is. It looks like what the netizens said about both her and The Clown were right. They're definitely newcomers who don't know how to play by the rules!"

"Wild Rose has offended Flowing Time!"

Some of Flowing Time's fans were cursing at this.

"Fuck."

"Who is this woman!"

"She's so disrespectful!"

"Why's a newcomer like you getting all arrogant!"

Flowing Time also looked a little unhappy. He was irate but maintained the smile on his face. He didn't seem like he minded it at all. Then he went over to Jiang Hanwei and had a few words with him before sitting down.

Xiaodong and Amy looked at Wild Rose in amazement.

Zhang Xia and Fan Wenli were also staring at her.

Dong Shanshan announced, "Next, let's welcome the last contestant—The Clown!"

Applause sounded.

In reality, it was just encouraging applause. The gap between the tallies was too large. The only person who could catch up to Flowing Time now was Petal Shower, but even that didn't seem too likely anymore. The difference was already more than 300,000 votes, while The Clown, in the last place, was still at his previous tally of just over a million. He was behind Flowing Time by almost 3 million votes!

How could he possibly catch up?

It was totally impossible!

As a result, the championship was practically in Flowing Time's hands. The last song of the competition had lost all meaning since it didn't matter whether The Clown sang or not!

Some of the audience members sighed sadly.

"The Clown should have placed much higher than this."

"Yeah, that should absolutely not have been a problem with the strength that he has."

"Ai, he deserved it for being so stubborn. Who told him to not take off his mask?"

"It's not that he doesn't want to do it. I'm sure it's because he and Wild Rose, who he invited, are both little-known, so no one would recognize them even if they took off their masks. If they did, it might cause a reverse effect instead, so they might as well try to keep it mysterious."

"You're right! But that's why Flowing Time will win. His reputation was already quite big to begin with, and he even got A-lister Jiang Hanwei to be his guest partner!"

"Showbiz is still very dependent on one's popularity."

"The Clown didn't lose for no reason."

"He's just a newcomer, so he can still slowly work his way up."

The Clown had already stepped onto the stage.

But right at this moment, an accident occurred!

Wild Rose's hair was a little messy, so she put her hand behind her head and straightened it a little. But, intentional or not, the mask on her face loosened and thudded onto the floor!

Her mask fell off!

A perfectly sculpted face was exposed to everyone's sight!

When Jiang Hanwei heard the commotion, he instinctively turned his head. He was just about to bend down to pick up the mask for Wild Rose like a gentleman would when he saw her face. He was immediately stunned!

Zhang Xia was stunned!

Li Xiaoxian was stunned!

Flowing Time was stunned!

Hu Fei was stunned!

The program team was stunned!

The entire live audience was so shocked that their jaws dropped to the floor!

Chapter 1077: 'Exaggerated' brought to life!

It went quiet!

There was dead silence in the theater!

There was also dead silence at home!

When Wild Rose saw that everyone was looking at her, she chuckled and bent down to pick up her mask. "Aiyo, my mask fell off. I'm sorry about that, hur hur."

Zhang Yuanqi!

It was the Heavenly Queen Zhang Yuanqi!

The entire place was shocked!

Or rather, the place was dumbfounded!

Zhang Xia was startled. "Yuanqi?"

Xiaodong stared hard. "Sister Zhang?"

"Sister Zhang, it's you!" Amy and Li Xiaoxian simply could not believe it!

Fan Wenli didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "And I was just wondering who could have sung so well!"

Jiang Hanwei said in surprise, "What are you doing here?"

Flowing Time was sweating nervously now and looked embarrassed. He had wanted to give a hug to Wild Rose earlier, but was rejected with a simple response from her. Flowing Time had been infuriated by her rejection, but now, he could not even get angry. With Zhang Yuanqi's status in the entertainment industry, even if she did not accept his hug and had criticized him on the spot, he would still have to stand there and take the abuse.

Why was it her?

Why was it Zhang Yuanqi?

How could The Clown have possibly managed to invite her!

How could The Clown have possibly moved the Heavenly Queen with his invitation!

In an instant, the place blew up!

A lot of people had only just returned to their senses!

"Holy shit!"

"Oh my god!"

"It's Sister Zhang!"

"It was her who sang 'Love of a Lifetime' just now?"

"Goddamn!"

"This is too insane!"

"How could Sister Zhang take part in a competitive show? It's impossible!"

"Did The Clown invite her? Who on earth is The Clown! He even managed to invite Sister Zhang?"

"A newcomer? Who the fuck said that they were newcomers? Huh?"

"Is Sister Zhang a newcomer? Can you guys not be so funny?"

"I've realized that we were wrong; we've made a colossal mistake! Who said that they didn't take off their masks because they were unknowns? Huh? Who said that? The Clown is amazing! He even invited Sister Zhang to be his celebrity guest partner? What kind of a person is he?"

Everyone was so shocked that they were unable to get a hold of themselves!

Han Qi's jaw dropped!

Even Hu Fei, Hou Ge, Xiao Lu, and the rest of the program team staff went slack-jawed. They did not know who Wild Rose really

was either! The Heavenly Queen had come to King of Masked Singers?

Backstage, Spinach was watching the show on TV in shock!

Li Xiaoxian could no longer bear it and asked, "Sister Zhang, why didn't you take off your mask earlier then? If you had done it..."

Zhang Yuanqi smiled. "He wouldn't let me."

Fan Wenli said in surprise, "Why not?"

Zhang Xia said, "Yuanqi, who on earth is he? He could even convince you to come?"

Amy said, "Both of you should have taken off your masks in the first round!"

No one knew what The Clown was thinking. If Zhang Yuanqi had taken off her mask and revealed herself in the first round, The Clown would surely have been crowned champion, without question. No matter if it was King of Oddity using his charity card, or if Flowing Time had invited Huo Dongfang or Jiang Hanwei and played the emotional card, all of those would have been meaningless. As long as Zhang Yuanqi was standing beside The Clown, he would definitely have been the champion tonight!

Yao Jiancai and Zhang Xia looked at The Clown who was already standing onstage!

The live audience looked at him!

The TV viewers looked at him!

It was the second round now and the last song of the competition. How can you still catch up? Even if Sister Zhang's identity has been exposed, you still can't catch up!

You clearly could have won!

You clearly could have taken a huge lead in the first round!

But why?

Just why didn't you?

All eyes fell on The Clown.

Onstage.

Zhang Ye stood there quietly.

He was dressed in a suit, all in white, and looked particularly clean and quiet at present. Spinach's words kept playing in his mind, echoing over and over again. When he saw Spinach getting eliminated, Sunset Glow falling behind in the rankings, and Petal Shower being unable to fight Flowing Time's tally even though she had sung so well, Zhang Ye couldn't help but think of what he had gone through in the past. Without a face, without a background, and without anything to speak of, all he had was a burning passion and his determination. But journeying down this path was so difficult and such a struggle that no one would be able to see or understand it!

Determination, is it wrong?

Hard work, is it wrong?

Why do you guys only see the fancy things in life?

Why don't you even glance at the people working slowly and steadily?

Can't you all see me?

Can you really not see people like us?

Everyone was asking Zhang Ye why!

But in Zhang Ye's heart, he was also asking everyone why!

I'm not going to take off my mask!

I'm not going to canvass for votes!

I'm not doing any gimmicks!

I just want to sing in peace!

Is that not allowed?

Why can't I do that?

The music played!

The notes of the piano flowed like water!

It sounded rather heavy!

It sounded rather sad!

Zhang Ye suddenly opened his eyes and looked at the other contestants, the live audience, the live broadcast cameras. With anger and questioning, [he raised his microphone](#).

"You only see the brightest of stars in the starry night sky.

"In a crowd you adore the one with the hottest stories, the most come by."

The audience was stunned!

Zhang Xia was stunned!

Zhang Yuanqi was also stunned!

This song...

Zhang Ye lightly laughed. "Who doesn't long to stand at the center of the stage."

He looked up at the lights around him. "The halo shining only for me.

"After the show's over and the curtains come down, who cares what you think, "and who cares what you do then?

"Exaggeration is not a crime.

"It can fill an empty and tedious lifetime.

"Those prying eyes, that gossiping mouth, they spice up every get-together's downtime."

In the audience, those who had been talking and criticizing The Clown for not understanding how to adapt suddenly fell silent.

They could not say anything at all!

Zhang Ye's voice went higher as he made a mocking gesture!

He was questioning them!

He was questioning all of them!

"Do we really have to exaggerate?"

"Whether it is right or wrong, false or true?"

"Comparing style, image, and value!"

Zhang Ye pointed at everyone and sang loudly.

"Who would speak their mind?"

"Who would speak their mind?"

"As long as the picture is shocking!"

"As long as the story blows up in kind!"

"Flowing out of my mouth is mocking, "hyperbole, and laughter aligned!"

"Only at night before the mirror can I secretly tell the truth unrefined!"

Zhang Ye now laughed insolently and rudely. It was a laugh of ridicule and derision!

King of Oddity's face had turned green from anger!

Flowing Time's face was at once flush red and flush white!

King of Oddity's and Flowing Time's fans in the audience were also angered!

"What is this!"

"He's obviously implying something!"

"Damn, who're you trying to criticize?"

"This Clown is awful!"

"He's exactly the type of person I dislike!"

"I don't like him either. Why is he accusing our Flowing Time for no reason!"

However, The Clown's voice rang out again!

Zhang Ye sang to those in the audience.

"Whether you like me

"or don't like me,

"that is your choice!"

Those people who had been talking ill of The Clown were stunned!

"I'm just hoping to voice myself sometimes and catch your ear.

"Since I sang the first note of my musical dream, "I have never given up here!

"There are too many obstacles from myself, circumstances, and onlookers.

"Good or bad, I have bear it."

Zhang Ye sang high.

"So I want to sing a song of praise!

"And in the song set my emotions ablaze!

"Though there's many options, how many good songs are there that can move people and give them feeling?

"Do we really have to exaggerate?

"Whether it is right or wrong, false or true?

"Comparing style, image, and value!

"Who's the big winner!

"Who's the big winner!

"As long as the picture is shocking! / As long as the story blows up in kind!

"Flowing out of my mouth is mocking, hyperbole and laughter aligned. / Only at night before the mirror can I secretly tell the truth unrefined!

"Ahhh.

"Ahhhhh."

Chen Guang could no longer help himself and stood up. "Great!"

Absorbed in the music, Fan Wenli said, "Now this is singing!"

Zhang Yuanqi sighed and said, "Now this is a musical genius, as well as a musical madman!"

For some reasons, Li Xiaoxian's eyes reddened.

Everyone had been shocked by this song!

They were in disbelief that there could be this sort of song! How could anyone sing a song like this! He was a natural-born singer! The Clown really was the favored Son of Heaven! He seemed to have been born just for this industry! Even genius singers like Fan Wenli and Chen Guang felt a little envious of him! A singer like you should've already become world famous. So why? Why was someone as lucky as you— However, The Clown's next line dumbfounded them once again!

Zhang Ye shook his head and flapped his hands.

"The lucky one is not me.

"Because the path I've chosen is very tough!

"If I'm remarkable but can't stand out enough, "I must at least make sure there's no one else like me!"

Canvassing for votes?

Resorting to gimmicks?

They could make speeches better than they could sing?

Using charitable acts as a weapon?

Morally abducting the audience?

Should I also do the same?

Do I really have to learn from all that to win?

Zhang Ye suddenly raised his voice and went into his head voice. He grabbed his chest tight and poured all his confusion, doubt, and anger into song.

"Do we really have to exaggerate?

"I too grappled with it in my heart!"

He pointed at himself, jabbed his chest.

"When I was working hard on my own, "did anyone see me?

"Would anyone know?"

For a song, I did not sleep for two days!

I always try my best in everything I do!

I've really worked my tail off!

But did you guys see?

Did you know?

The audience was falling into low spirits!

They suddenly felt something heavy tie up their hearts, something that made them want to cry!

Meanwhile, Zhang Ye seemed to go crazy. He shout-sang.

"Singing until my thoughts dissolve!

"And until my throat goes hoarse!

"You can say that I am enthralled!

"That I've gone crazy!

"But if I can't be carefree, how can I call myself a singer?

"Ahhh!"

He pointed at the camera, at all of the audience members. He shouted with a staunch and stubborn look in his eyes, "Look at me shining for you-u-u-u-u-u-u-u!"

Spinach cried!

Li Xiaoxian could no longer hold back her tears and they rolled down her cheeks!

They did not know why they were crying, they really did not know why!

But as they watched and cried at The Clown's onstage mournful shout-singing, many other people started crying their hearts out as well!

All of the live audience stood up in shock!

The home viewers got the goosebumps from listening to the song and stood up in shock as well!

Zhang Ye pointed at the audience and yelled.

"Whether you like it or not,

"please accept me graciously!"

All of a sudden, his voice soared an octave higher!

Yelling!

Screaming!

Fury!

"As the next moment is when I'll sparkle for you-u-u-u!"

"HEEEEEEEYYYYYY!"

Look at me!

Please, all of you. Look at me!

I am The Clown!

I am singing for every one of you!

The place exploded!

Everyone went insane!

Everyone stood up as though they had gone mad and were screaming like crazy!

Chapter 1078: Shocking the world!

Things got out of hand!

The place blew up!

The entire live broadcast venue was reverberating with The Clown's scream of madness at the end. All that oppression, confusion, rage, and determination were let out with that final scream. He blew up entirely and screamed to the point that his lungs almost tore apart. The artistry and soul of this song from beginning to end were all assimilated into this last outburst!

The entire song.

All of the lyrics.

Every part of his singing.

It could only be described as shocking!

Fan Wenli was shocked!

Zhang Xia, Xiaodong and the rest were also taken aback!

What kind of song was this?

What kind of person was this?

Li Xiaoxian was already in tears. She raised her hand high and gave a thumbs up!

In the staff area, Han Qi was also crying. She was covered in goosebumps and was so emotional that she did not know how to express herself. All she could do was vent in the most primitive of ways by shouting, "The Clown! The Clown! The Clown!"

In the audience.

His mother stood up and shouted, "The Clown!"

Zhang Ye's three sisters literally jumped out of their seats. "The Clown!"

Ha Qiqi shouted, "The Clown!"

Zhang Zuo raised both his hands and shouted loudly, "The Clown!"

A male audience member screamed, "The Clown!"

A female audience member was in tears and saying, "The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

One person!

A hundred people!

A thousand people!

The shouting was becoming more and more united!

The shouting was getting louder and louder!

Suddenly, someone in the audience shouted out something different that caused everyone to follow suit!

That person shouted, "Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

His mother was shouting!

His father was also shouting!

The audience was shouting like crazy. With this song, the previous performances by Flowing Time, Petal Shower, and King of Oddity had all been thrown to the back of everyone's minds. None of those songs mattered anymore!

Onstage, Zhang Ye's voice had gone hoarse. Even after the music

had stopped, he was still deeply immersed in the emotions of his singing. It was the shouting that brought him back to reality. When he saw the sea of people in the audience standing up and chanting his stage name, mixed with calls of "champion," Zhang Ye froze for a moment. He suddenly understood why he was able to persevere up till now.

Hu Fei sighed, "He's really, really great!"

Xiao Lu wiped away her tears and said, "Why, why am I reminded of Teacher Zhang!"

Hou Ge said, "Yeah, these lyrics also made me think of Teacher Zhang. He's just like The Clown, always encountering those difficult situations along the way and getting ignored by people. Others may not know and simply criticize him. But those who have ever worked with Teacher Zhang know! Do they even know how much hard work Teacher Zhang puts into making his shows? Have they seen it for themselves? Whether it's Teacher Zhang or The Clown, both of them really have not had it easy!"

Dafei said, "The lyrics were so well-written!"

This song was called "Exaggerated."

The original was [Eason Chan's Cantonese version](#), but Zhang Ye chose to sing [Terry Lin's Mandarin version](#) for his performance. These two versions were both very good songs and he liked them very much as well. However, the meanings behind them were polar opposites. He had chosen to sing the Mandarin version because it expressed the exact situation that he was in now, and it was also what he had been hoping to say all these years!

In all fairness, this was not a song that one would be amazed with when they first heard it. At least, Zhang Ye did not feel this way when he first heard the song. Whether it was the Mandarin or the Cantonese version, he did not feel much for either of them and could not remember the lyrics either. In fact, he did not even know what the songs were trying to convey. The melody was also not

that beautiful. But when he listened to it for the fifth time, and then the tenth time, he suddenly felt very surprised by it. Afterwards, it was only a matter of falling in love with the song.

This was the type of song that slowly became nicer with time. But today, Zhang Ye made it popular almost immediately due to the atmosphere, setting, and message behind it!

Zhang Ye walked off the stage.

Using the window of time before he returned to his seat, Amy looked at Chen Guang and asked, "Teacher Chen, if you had joined the competition and faced The Clown onstage, who do you think would win?"

She did not mean it maliciously.

Amy really was just being curious.

For those at today's taping, if they mentioned the two best singers present at the venue, the best would definitely be Zhang Yuanqi. But second best would not be Fan Wenli, Zhang Xia, Li Xiaoxian, nor Xiaodong. It would be Chen Guang—this was not Amy's personal ranking of them, but the long accepted opinion of the public and the industry.

Chen Guang smiled wryly. "I wouldn't want to think about that."

Amy did not understand. "Ah? What do you mean?"

Fan Wenli laughed and said, "What Old Chen is trying to say is that he wouldn't want to be standing on the same stage and competing against someone like The Clown." Then, she gave Chen Guang a look. "Afraid you'd lose?"

Chen Guang rolled his eyes but did not answer.

Would he lose?

Chen Guang did not know.

He only knew one thing. To beat The Clown...it would be extremely difficult!

Especially this song The Clown sang today called "Exaggerated." Even if it was Zhang Yuanqi competing against The Clown, she might not be able to beat him. The Clown was really insane today. This song was insane. His singing was insane. Everyone who was here today was seemingly baptized from head to toe by this song! This was the charm of song, the charm of music. But most importantly, it was the charm of the singer. Chen Guang questioned whether he could sing this song as well as The Clown if it had been given to him. That final scream at the end was a mixture of complex emotions and not something that just anyone could sing!

He could not do it.

Fan Wenli could not do it.

Li Xiaoxian could not do it.

Flowing Time could not do it.

Even Sister Zhang would probably not be able to do it.

That scream could only have come from The Clown!

...

In the outside world.

Shock had also descended upon everyone watching at this moment!

Among the viewers who were watching the King of Masked Singers grand finals on their televisions, nine out of ten were stunned by what they saw!

They hadn't been interested in listening to The Clown's last song originally, thinking that the results had already been decided. Every one of them knew that The Clown would not have a chance of being crowned champion anymore. But when Wild Rose's mask fell off, when "Exaggerated" played on TV, almost all of them got a shock!

They had been shocked by "Exaggerated"!

They had been shocked by The Clown's determination and anger!

"Quick, tune into the live broadcast!"

"Holy shit!"

"The Clown has blown his top!"

"This song is just too goddamn awesome, isn't it?"

"Oh God, I'm going crazy from listening to this!"

"What's this song called? Goddammit!"

"It's called 'Exaggerated'!"

"How can there be such an awesome song in this world! It's even an original? Today's the first time it's been sung? Fuck, who the hell wrote this song for him!"

"It's the last song of the finals? Ah! Quickly go and vote!"

"Oh right, voting is still ongoing!"

"I already voted for Flowing Time. What do I do now?"

"My vote has been cast as well. I fucking gave it to King of Oddity! Fuck, curse these hands of mine! If only I had known, I wouldn't have voted so early on! I would definitely, 10,000%, have voted for The Clown! I can't even take back my vote now! No, I can't just let this be. I'll go get my parents' cell phones to vote!"

"Hurry, everyone!"

"We don't have much time!"

"Comrades, give your votes to The Clown!"

"If a singer like him were to place last in this competition, that would really be too deplorable! That would be an insult to the entire music industry!"

"I'm here!"

"I've voted!"

"Damn, do we need you to tell us? I've voted already!"

"I'm gonna call my sister and brother to get them to vote as well!"

"Just based on this song, I don't care who The Clown turns out to be after he unmasks himself. I will fucking become his braindead fan for life! For life! With this post as my witness!"

"Count me in!"

"Count me in too!"

"Since 'The Internationale,' I've been a diehard fan of The Clown. But with this 'Exaggerated,' I'm going to turn into a braindead fan from now on!"

"No impulsiveness, no exaggeration, no bluffing! The Clown is the only true singer!"

"He's the only person to sing with all his soul on this stage!"

There was an explosion of comments on Weibo!

The industry insiders were blowing up with excitement!

"Exaggerated" had shocked the world!

Chapter 1079: The grand champion is born!

At the venue of the grand finals.

The Clown walked back to his seat in the front row.

Amy came over and asked anxiously, "Teacher, which famous figure are you, really? Can you stop teasing us like this? I beg of you, please tell me! I'm dying of curiosity!"

Xiaodong stared at The Clown.

Li Xiaoxian and the others were also looking at him.

The final song had been performed. However, The Clown still did not take off his mask. A lot of people were very curious but also very worried about The Clown at the same time. There was not much time left as it was the last performance in the battle for the grand champion. Since this was the final sprint, why are you still not taking off your mask? What are you still waiting for? It'll be too late to reveal yourself when the results are announced! You still have some time to increase your number of votes if you reveal your face now!

Flowing Time was feeling rather nervous as he looked at The Clown.

King of Oddity was feeling the same, his fingers continuously fidgeting and tapping his thigh. Clearly, he was not as calm as he looked.

They naturally did not wish for The Clown to reveal himself!

This song had actually impressed the two of them. Although the lyrics were scolding them, they were still impressed with it!

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Who are you?"

The Clown still did not answer.

He had promised Spinach!

Is there no recognition for those of us who just want to sing earnestly?

Zhang Ye wanted to tell her that this path was not a dead end and that she could still continue journeying down it!

Therefore, he was very insistent on not revealing his face!

"Teacher?"

"Famous person?"

"Say something?"

The Clown smiled and shook his head in silence.

Amy huffed and tried again to change his mind.

Li Xiaoxian tugged at her. "Don't."

After listening to the song "Exaggerated," they understood Teacher Clown's character. He definitely would not change his mind once he had decided on something. Li Xiaoxian clearly understood that before the results were announced, The Clown would surely not take off his mask. There was no reason, but she just knew that it would be like this.

Dong Shanshan appeared back onstage.

She checked the remaining time before announcing, "Now that the final song has been performed, we're only three minutes away from the end of the voting. The voting window will close in three minutes!"

In the audience.

His mother quickly said, "I'm going to vote as well. Mengmeng, how do I vote? Help me vote, quickly!"

His third sister took the cell phone from her and asked, "Who do you want to vote for?"

His mother said, "For The Clown, of course! Do you even need to ask? This young man sang so well! His parents are also here today,

and they're seated here in the crowd with us. How can we allow his parents to witness him getting last place despite singing so well? Just how heart-wrenching would that be! Hurry up and vote!"

His father nodded firmly. "Well said. Mengmeng, take my cell phone too."

His third sister went right into action. "OK, I'll help the two of you to vote!"

His second sister said loudly, "I voted for The Clown too. Is there still time to catch up? There's probably not enough time for that, right?"

His eldest sister slapped her thigh and said, "The difference in the votes from earlier was just too much! If it was just a difference of a few hundred thousand votes, he could definitely catch up. But the difference was 2 to 3 million votes! So how can he possibly catch up?"

His second sister slapped her forehead and said, "Oh no, oh no! My idol won't be crowned grand champion!"

At the venue, many of the audience members were rushing to vote as well!

There were less than 3 minutes left!

Dong Shanshan announced, "Alright, let's take a look at the latest tallies. Can we have our staff pull it up on the big screen? Thank you."

These words made everyone even more nervous!

When they heard, everyone immediately looked up!

Zhang Yuanqi looked at the screen with narrowed eyes!

Zhang Xia stared with wide eyes!

Chen Guang and Fan Wenli did not blink at all!

Everyone's attention focused on the big screen!

The television viewers were also watching intently!

Li Xiaoxian clenched her fists!

Backstage, Liao Yiqi (Spinach) took a deep breath, as she was so nervous that her hands were trembling!

The Clown's liaison, Han Qi, had already closed her eyes. She was afraid to even peek. Claspng her hands together and facing the big screen, she kept chanting some words that the staff around her could not understand. She sounded like she was praying!

Only King of Oddity and Flowing Time felt a little relaxed. When they heard that The Clown would not be taking off his mask, they felt completely at ease and heaved a long sigh of relief. To them, as long The Clown did not take off his mask, he would have no chance of winning today even if Zhang Yuanqi's identity had already been exposed. The main issue here was that Zhang Yuanqi's mask had fallen off too late, during the last few minutes of the competition before the final song began. It would not help The Clown much even if she was the Heavenly Queen!

First place should stay with Flowing Time!

King of Oddity's position in the top three was also guaranteed!

Xiao Lu said, "What a shame."

Dafei sighed. "It was a bit too late. If it happened a little earlier... hai!"

Hou Ge said, "He really had the ability to be crowned the champion, but it was too little, too late!"

Following that, the tallies were displayed on the big screen!

When they saw the results, the entire venue fell dead silent!

First:

Flowing Time, 4.01 million votes!

Second:

The Clown, 3.56 million votes!

Third:

Petal Shower, 3.21 million votes!

Amy was dumbfounded by the results!

Fan Wenli and Chen Guang looked at each other in astonishment!

Zhang Yuanqi smiled!

Xiaodong screamed, "Oh my goodness!"

The audience suddenly boiled over with excitement!

Many people jumped up in shock!

His parents got very excited!

Zhang Ye's three sisters wore shocked expressions!

Zhang Xia, Yao Jiancai, and the others were all staring at the screen in disbelief!

"He's catching up!"

"Fuck, The Clown is catching up!"

"He's catching up from a million votes behind!"

"His votes tripled?"

"Ahhhh!"

"Are you serious?"

"The difference is only 400,000 votes! It's only a difference of 400,000 now!"

"Oh my God!"

"This is crazy! This is fucking crazy!"

Flowing Time was so shocked that he nearly fell out of his chair!

How is that possible!

Just how is that possible!

How could he have caught up?

There's no reason for him to have caught up!

Jiang Hanwei was stunned and his jaw dropped!

King of Oddity and his guest partner were also stunned!

It...it was just impossible!

There were only 90 seconds left to go!

Flowing Time's tally had already stopped moving. It seemed to have stopped at 4.01 million votes while The Clowns' tally was still surging up at an incredible rate!

3.60 million!

3.70 million!

3.80 million!

Dong Shanshan froze onstage!

No one thought The Clown would actually catch up!

No one thought The Clown would actually achieve a feat that even the gods might not be able to achieve!

There were still 40 seconds to go!

There were still 39 seconds to go!

The entire audience stood up!

A lot of people could not take this excitement and were so nervous that their hearts nearly burst from their chests!

Countless viewers watching TV started screaming. They were witnessing a miracle right now!

3.85 million!

3.90 million!

3.95 million!

Counting down to the last ten seconds!

Backstage, Spinach was finding it hard to stifle her emotions as she rushed back into the theater!

Han Qi looked at the tally on the screen, and tears rolled down uncontrollably!

Dumbfounded, Hu Fei gazed at the screen!

Everyone looked at the screen with stunned faces!

3.98 million!

Five seconds!

Four seconds!

3.99 million!

4 million!

4.01 million!

4.02 million!

At this moment, the voting ended!

Looking at the final results of the voting, everyone was stunned. Then, they suddenly screamed and cheered!

"He won!"

"He won!"

"He really won!"

"The Clown is the Masked King!"

"Ahhhhhhh!"

"Masked King!"

"Masked King!"

"Masked King!"

"Masked King!"

"Masked King!"

The audience started chanting in unison!

Even the ceiling was almost blown away!

Chapter 1080: Gu Cheng's 'Life Fantasia'!

On the stage.

Dong Shanshan announced loudly, "The grand champion of the first season of King of Masked Singers is—The Clown!"

All the cameras focused on The Clown!

All the guests and audience members stood up to clap for him!

Han Qi cried as she hugged Xiao Lu, who was next to her, and shouted, "We've won! We've won!"

Spinach's tears were also flowing. Teacher Clown! Thank you! Thank you! You've really carried out your promise to me! I will continue journeying down this path. From now on, I won't waver again!

A miracle!

This was a crazy miracle!

The Clown had managed to jump from last place with slightly over a million votes to first place with his final song and in the last few minutes of voting. There had never before been such a turn of events at any of the other singing competitions! Never!

Everyone was dumbfounded!

King of Oddity felt a sense of bitterness.

Flowing Time was crying out "impossible" over and over again in his head!

He should have been the champion!

The grand champion was supposed to be him!

But why did it end up like this?

Why did so many people vote for The Clown?

This influence, this appeal, this singing, they couldn't have come

from someone who was just an unknown!

Who are you?

Just who the hell are you?

Suddenly, a female audience member shouted, "Take off your mask and reveal yourself!"

Instantaneously, many others joined with her!

All of the audience started chanting in unison!

"Reveal!"

"Reveal!"

"Reveal!"

"Reveal!"

Then, even the guests followed along and chanted!

Zhang Xia laughed and said, "Reveal!"

Amy said loudly, "Reveal!"

Fan Wenli said, "Reveal"

Li Xiaoxian said, "Reveal!"

Zhang Yuanqi was keeping a close eye on The Clown, who was walking away.

Zhang Ye exited the stage and went backstage to change costumes. He still had another song left to perform as the competition allowed the grand champion to get one final performance!

Dong Shanshan looked slightly excited onstage. She said loudly, "Today, the first grand champion of King of Masked Singers has been born. We're extremely excited to witness the birth of a legendary singer. Perhaps he might have been an unknown singer that few know of. Perhaps he might have been a bright and shining star. We don't know who he was, but we all want to know who he

is. We all want to see what the face beneath The Clown's mask looks like, and to know what sort of a person he is!"

The theater fell silent!

The home viewers were staring at their TVs with hanging jaws!

Dong Shanshan said loudly, "Now the chance has finally come after waiting so long. The Clown will be taking his mask off very soon. I know you're all as anxious as I am, but please give Teacher Clown a minute to get changed. He still has one song left to perform. Later, during the song, The Clown's identity shall be revealed!"

...

Weibo was blowing up!

The King of Masked Singers' thread was flooding with comments!

"He really won!"

"He's finally going to reveal himself!"

"Quick, go and watch Beijing TV!"

"The Clown is going to reveal his face soon!"

"I freaking wanna know who the hell this saint is!"

"He's really amazing! Amazing!"

"What? The Clown was crowned champion? Didn't he have no chance? I stopped watching just now! What happened? What happened during the last few minutes?"

"Previous poster, just go and cry yourself to sleep!"

"Something big happened during that time! The Clown totally turned the tide with his efforts!"

"Holy shit! Seriously? He could even catch up in those circumstances? Who on earth is he?"

"That's what we wanna know too!"

"Your question is being asked by people all over the country right now!"

...

Within the industry.

The music industry.

Whether it was the newcomers, the active singers, or even the retired musicians, all of them were alarmed at this moment. They all had their televisions switched on and were currently staring intently at the screen!

"Did anyone manage to guess who he is?"

"No!"

"No one was able to guess at all!"

"Who is he, where did he get his songs—nobody knows!"

"He's about to reveal himself!"

"Wait for him to finish changing his costume!"

It was not only the people from the music industry!

People from other professions in the entertainment industry were also watching their televisions in amazement!

Huo Dongfang was watching!

Ning Lan was watching!

Tang Dazhang was also watching!

...

The viewership rating kept soaring!

The viewership rating for King of Masked Singers at this point in time had reached a historical high. Even when The Clown was singing "Exaggerated," the viewership rating was not as high as this moment!

Backstage.

The waiting room door opened.

Zhang Ye had changed into his costume and was about to walk out!

However, the staff who were standing and waiting outside were all surprised when they saw him!

Han Qi was stunned!

Xiao Lu was dumbfounded!

Dafei nearly fainted on the spot!

Xiao Lu pointed at The Clown's outfit and cried out, "A-Are you gonna wear that?"

Dafei said, "Did you change into the wrong outfit?"

The Clown laughed. "No, this is the correct one."

Han Qi said anxiously, "B-But how can you wear that? How can you wear something like that!"

However, The Clown said, "This is it. Let's go already!"

Along the way, all the staff who saw him were also startled, without an exception. They all stood there and watched him, dumbfounded, then turned to stare at each other with odd expressions!

At the venue.

The piano played!

The music was starting!

The audience was very confused by this.

"Where is he?"

"Why isn't anyone coming out yet?"

"Did they play the music too early?"

"Where's The Clown?"

"Eh, why is there music playing?"

Nobody was sure of what was going on.

In the audience, his mother was blinking and wondering what was happening.

His father peered at the waiting area.

Right at this moment, before even appearing on stage, The Clown's voice rang out through the venue. It was him speaking. He was speaking against a musical backdrop!

"There are always people asking me why I came to this stage. There are always people asking me what is it that I'm trying to achieve. Today, I will happily answer those questions. The reason why I came here and those songs that I chose were all for a dream that I have. A rather laughable, but very great dream."

The Clown's microphone was already connected to the sound system!

He was walking over from backstage!

The mood of the audience was once again lifted. Everyone pricked their ears up to listen!

With the piano accompaniment, The Clown's voice drifted out from all sides as he recited.

"Put my visions and dreams

"in a slender seashell.

"Wind my roof wove of willows "with the long song of the summer cicada.

"I tighten the stays, the wind blows the sail through the morning fog.

"And I'm off,

"without aim,

"drifting through the blue sky."

The audience was stunned by what they were hearing!

What was this about?

A poem?

A...poem?

Zhang Xia's expression changed!

Jiang Hanwei's pupils dilated!

His mother suddenly stood up. "This...this..."

Zhang Ye's three sisters were also dumbfounded!

A lot of people's jaws dropped!

The Clown smiled.

"Night is a valley,

"the day a mountain peak.

"Sleep! I close my eyes

"and the world falls away.

"The horse of time

"collapses.

"The yellowtail waxwing

"builds a nest in my carriage.

"I want to keep roaming the world— "To deserts, jungles, the remotest spots.

"I impress my footprints, like seals into the earth "and the world

"mingles into me."

The Clown's voice was getting louder and louder!

The outline of his figure could be seen. He raised his leg and stepped up onto the stage!

The audience started exclaiming in shock!

They were confused by what The Clown was wearing!

He was in his pajamas!

The Clown had worn his pajamas onto the stage!

He was even barefoot!

No one had dared to dress like this before!

This was a live show!

People from all over the country were watching!

Why aren't you wearing something more proper?

Why are you dressed so casually?

What are you planning to do?

What will you be singing?

The Clown stood onstage and looked at everyone with a smile.

"I want to sing

"a human song

"that ages from now

"will chorus through the universe."

Everyone was stunned with their mouths agape!

All of the audience and guests, as well as all the staff at the venue, had seemingly gotten their tails stepped on as they nearly jumped up in shock!

You...

You...

You're...

Chapter 1081: The Clown takes off his mask!

Flowing Time gasped!

Different expressions were shifting and running across King of Oddity's face!

When "Life Fantasia" from The Clown's world was recited, a lot of people felt as though their sweat glands had suddenly exploded! This was a poem they had never heard before. It was such a ridiculously good poem that many people became very engrossed in listening to it! However, the reason for their shock was not because of how good this poem was. What shocked them was totally unrelated to this poem's literary and artistic standards!

It was because this poem had suddenly reminded them of someone!

At this moment, everyone watching on TV and those at the venue all thought of one man!

Zhang Xia said anxiously, "Is he?"

Amy said, "Surely that can't be, right?"

Yao Jiancai said, "Holy shit!"

Chen Guang stared with wide eyes and said, "That's impossible!"

Xiaodong also shouted in astonishment, "It can't possibly be him! It's absolutely impossible!"

No one believed that The Clown could be that man!

Who are you?

Just who are you?

The music suddenly started playing gently.

The title of the song was already displayed on the teleprompter screen: "[I Am What I Am](#)"!

When everyone saw this, they were stunned!

"I Am What I Am"?

The Clown smiled as he walked around the stage barefoot.

Standing at center stage barefoot, it felt very cooling and comfortable. The pajamas he had on gave him a very relaxed sense of unparalleled coziness. It was as though all his disguises and burdens had suddenly been dropped and he could finally get back to being himself again in front of everyone!

It was such a good feeling!

Ever since he was banned, he had never felt so happy!

Being secretive? Hiding here and there? This was not actually something he enjoyed. He wished to stand in the light and sing to the entire world!

This was the real him!

This was who he really was!

The Clown lifted his microphone.

He started singing softly.

"Happiness is that there's more than one way to be happy.

"The greatest blessing is that everyone is the pride of the Creator."

The platform below him started to rise!

Bit by bit, it took Zhang Ye higher!

One meter...

Five meters...

Eight meters...

Before long, The Clown was standing at the highest point in the venue, ten meters up in the air where he could see everyone!

Dressed in his pajamas and standing barefoot, he sang loudly as though he had seemingly forgotten himself.

"There's no need to hide.

"I live for the life I appreciate.

"No need for a disguised side.

"In the bright corner I'll wait!"

The audience was stunned when they heard!

Xiaodong, Fan Wenli, and the others were also stunned!

No hiding?

No disguising?

Waiting in a bright corner?

You...

You...

At this moment!

The Clown suddenly raised his hand and ripped off his mask. Flinging it, the mask flew outward. A face that shocked everyone was exposed onscreen!

The eldest young sister shouted, "Ah!"

His second sister screamed!

His third sister's mouth was hanging there like she had forgotten how to scream!

Ha Qiqi, who was in the audience, was dumbfounded!

Zhang Zuo was dumbfounded!

Spinach looked at him in shock!

Han Qi was dumbfounded as she sat there unable to move!

It's you!

Why is it you?

How could it possibly be you!

At this moment, the venue erupted!

At this moment, everyone watching on TV went crazy!

This was really crazy!

Looking at that very familiar face, everyone went insane!

The Clown suddenly exploded with a high note!

Who am I?

You're all still asking who I am?

I'm not anyone else!

Lose the honorific.

The surname is Zhang.

He screamed as he looked up and pointed to his chest and sang loudly.

"I am what I am!

"A firework of different colors!

"The broad sky and open seas!

"I'll be the strongest bubble as I please!

"I like what I am!

"May the wild rose blossom at ease!

"Even in a lonely desert,

"Blooming in plain sight, unhurt!"

Banning?

Censoring?

Criticizing me?

Insulting me?

Bullying me?

It doesn't matter! It really doesn't matter at all!

Even if there is only one person looking at me, even if there isn't a single person left! I still won't retreat and let this world change me!

I am what I am!

No matter where I go, I am what I am!

Like that stubborn wild rose that blooms in the desert.

Can you all understand that?

Can you all see that?

In the audience, his mother suddenly cried as she pointed at the stage and shouted, "That's my son! My son!"

His father also teared up a little!

So earlier, when The Clown had said that his parents were here too, he was actually referring to them!

His mother was choking back her tears. "It hasn't been easy for Little Ye! It really hasn't been easy at all!"

His third sister shouted, "Brother!"

The eldest young sister and second sister were also so excited that they were unable to get ahold of themselves!

Currently, all of the audience's reactions were similar to theirs!

Shock!

Enthrallment!

Astonishment!

Disbelief!

It was Zhang Ye!

The Clown was actually Zhang Ye!

The Clown laughed!

He laughed without restraint!

"How happy I am,

"Enjoying life in a glass house."

He pointed to the sky and sang loudly.

"And telling the world!

"What it's like to be bright and open!"

A sustained note made the entire audience stand up!

Screams!

Applause!

Everything else was drowned out in an instant!

A lot of people were crying!

A lot of people were shocked!

The man who insisted on singing when he had nearly fainted on the stage due to a fever during the first episode—that was Zhang Ye!

The man who sang "The Internationale" with anger when he was faced with censorship from several television associations—that was Zhang Ye!

At this moment, many of The Clown's songs floated uninhibited into the minds of the audience!

I am a beautiful, beautiful wild rose! / Hating the Heavens for being unfair!

I'm ugly, / but I am so tender!

Arise! ye pris'ners of starvation! 'Tis the final conflict!

You only see the brightest of stars in the starry night sky!

Zhang Xia cried out, "It's Little Zhang!"

Xiaodong shouted, "Oh my god!"

Zhang Yuanqi was the first person to guess that The Clown might

have been Zhang Ye. But when she saw The Clown take off his mask and the face behind it, she still found it unbelievable!

Dong Shanshan was dumbfounded!

High up in the air!

The Clown pointed at himself.

"I am what I am!

"A firework of different colors!

"The broad sky and open seas!

"I'll be the strongest bubble as I please!

"I like what I am!

"May the wild rose blossom at ease!

"Even in a lonely desert,

"Blooming in plain sight, unhurt!"

It was too shocking!

This song had turned the theater upside down!

This song was written with Zhang Ye in mind!

Every single word was about him!

Many of the audience members were waving their arms and screaming for Zhang Ye!

Countless viewers watching TV were shouting and yelling in shock and going crazy for Zhang Ye!

Zhang Ye closed his eyes.

He lowered his voice.

"Even in a lonely desert,

"Blooming in plain sight...unhurt."

The entire audience stood up!

It was as if everyone had agreed beforehand that they should stand up in unison!

Han Qi covered her mouth and cried. She had already lost count of the number of times she had cried today. It was really touching. She was captivated by his unique charm! So much so that she couldn't free herself!

Han Qi suddenly raised her hands and shouted, "Zhang Ye! Zhang Ye!"

In an instant, cheers erupted throughout the venue!

A female audience member shouted in tears, "Zhang Ye!"

A male audience member bellowed, "Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

The audience had gone out of control!

The audience had gone insane!

This night belonged to The Clown!

This night belonged to Zhang Ye!!

Chapter 1082: A national sensation!

At Old Rao's house.

The live broadcast of King of Masked Singers was showing on the television.

Yang Shu, sitting on the sofa, was staring with her mouth agape!

Rao Aimin was stunned!

Chenchen was also so shocked that her jaw had fallen to the floor!

Yang Shu said "Th-This is my senior bro?"

...

At Peking University.

It was almost summer break. The teachers from the Chinese Department were having a dinner party.

When "I Am What I Am" was performed on television in the restaurant's private room, when The Clown who was on screen suddenly ripped off his mask, the entire room fell silent. Before the song was finished, no one moved their chopsticks. Everyone looked like they had seen a ghost as they kept staring straight at the television!

"Zhang Ye?"

"It's Professor Zhang!"

"How could The Clown turn out to be him! Damn!"

...

At the SARFT.

In Old Wu's office.

Secretary Bai Li pushed open the door and came into the room.
"Chief Wu, something has happened!"

"What's the matter?" Wu Zeqing was working overtime to handle some documentation work. When she heard Bai Li, she did not even look up as she continued writing something calmly with her head lowered.

Bai Li said in horror, "Zhang Ye is on TV!"

Only then did Wu Zeqing slowly look up. "Oh?"

Bai Li said anxiously, "Take a quick look at King of Masked Singers!"

Wu Zeqing picked up the remote control and immediately turned on the television.

The figure of Zhang Ye appeared on screen!

Then Wu Zeqing laughed. "OK, I see."

But Bai Li could not laugh at all, because Zhang Ye was currently on the ban list. As the tone had been set long ago, these people were supposed to be restricted from appearing onscreen for a certain amount of time! But who could have expected Teacher Zhang Ye to take on another persona and appear on the most popular, currently running variety show while hiding behind a mask? Further, he revealed himself during the live broadcast. This was something that no one had expected at all!

...

At an entertainment company.

Fang Weihong stared at the television in shock!

A lot of her surrounding colleagues were also stunned!

Today, they were waiting for The Clown to take off his mask and were discussing whether they would be able to poach him to their company. The proposal was already written and the offer had been decided on as well. All that was left was for The Clown to reveal his true self. As long as they knew who he was, they could find and approach him!

But when Zhang Ye's face appeared behind the mask, their office fell silent!

Silence!

Then, Fang Weihong threw the proposal straight into the trash can and said, "There's no need to try to poach him anymore." Since it is him, there would be no talent agency that could ever poach him even if he was a free agent!

Her colleagues gave bitter smiles as they knew that their proposal was written in vain!

It was Zhang Ye?

The Clown fucking turned out to be Zhang Ye?

Oh my god!

What's happening with this world?

They felt as though that this world had gone crazy in this moment!

...

On television, the live audience was screaming in excitement!

On Weibo, the reactions were about the same as well!

A fan club that had kept a low profile ever since their idol went silent suddenly came alive and appeared again. This fan club that had previously made people tremble in fright countless times in the entertainment industry was called—Zhang Ye's fan club!

"Zhang Ye!"

"It's Teacher Zhang!"

"Oh my god!"

"Comrades, so Teacher Zhang did not disappear after all!"

"Fuck, when did our Old Zhang pick up singing?"

"I'm so surprised! This is so fucking surprising!"

"How could it be Zhang Ye! Goddammit!"

"I'm so shocked!"

"Is this for real? Is this really happening?"

"I love you to death, Teacher Zhang! I've been wondering why The Clown's bad temper felt so familiar!"

"I should have known! He even admitted defeat just so that he could eliminate Li Yu? How many people like him are there in the entertainment industry who dare to fall out and pick a fight with someone like that!"

"I've only been a braindead fan of two people in my entire life. One is Zhang Ye and the other is The Clown. In the end, the two of them are actually the same person! Can you guys imagine the shock? Can you? This is too unbelievable! Teacher Zhang, I love you to death! You're fantastic! You're really fantastic!"

The acting leader of Zhang Ye's fan club, Big Saber Bro, who had disappeared for a long time, suddenly appeared again!

Big Saber Bro: "My large saber is again again again again again again again again again again again again again again again unable to endure the thirst! Brothers and sisters! Follow my lead!"

In an instant, Li Yu's and Flowing Time's Weibo were filled with condemning voices!

Previously, they had not known about The Clown's identity. But now that they knew who he was, they definitely had to seek an explanation about the issue from back then. If they did not receive one, then they would scold them until they gave one!

Elsewhere.

Many netizens were shocked by what they were seeing.

"Fuck!"

"Zhang Ye's fan club has been revived!"

"They've started their insulting again!"

"These people are fucking warriors just like Zhang Ye!"

"Hahahaha, I haven't witnessed such a sight in such a long time. It feels pretty nostalgic to me!"

"Yeah, an entertainment circle without the presence of Zhang Ye's fan club is definitely incomplete. After such a long time without seeing them banding together for something, I really do miss them!"

"This Zhang Ye is amazing!"

"I thought that Teacher Zhang didn't know how to sing? Was he just pretending in the past?!"

"How devious of him! He's way too devious!"

"That's right, I've never before seen someone as awful as him!"

"But it's really such a nice song! I've realized that I've also become a braindead fan of Zhang Ye's! What should I do!"

...

At the King of Masked Singers' venue!

The song ended!

The live broadcast was still ongoing!

The entire venue was still going crazy!

Thousands of audience members began chanting Zhang Ye's name in unison as the atmosphere reached its climax. There was no way to calm them down!

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

The live broadcast was coming to an end!

Dong Shanshan was not feeling any calmer than the audience. She raised her microphone and said loudly with a smile, "Thank you, everyone. With Teacher Clown's song over, the King of Masked Singers grand finals has come to a perfect ending. Tell me, do you guys still wish to watch and listen to these teachers' performances again?"

The audience shouted:

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

Dong Shanshan announced loudly, "If so, I would like to send out an invitation to everyone on behalf of Beijing Television and the King of Masked Singers program team. King of Masked Singers will be holding a live concert next Saturday night! Contestants like The Clown, Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, Flowing Time, King of Oddity, and Spinach, whom you all like so much, will be appearing at the live concert! Then, I welcome everyone to join us for the event! At that time, let us witness the glory together!"

There was still more?

There was still going to be an episode showing the live concert?

When the audience heard, they became exceedingly excited!

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Fan Wenli!"

"Liao Yiqi!"

Everyone was madly shouting the names of the contestants they liked!

Counting down: three, two, one!

The live broadcast signal was shut off!

The night of the King of Masked Singers' finale had officially come to an end!

Zhang Ye, who had just gotten off from the stage, was immediately surrounded!

Yao Jiancai chided him with a laugh, "You sure are good, Little Zhang! Why didn't you tell me you joined the competition? You're a real puzzle! A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma!"

Zhang Ye felt a little embarrassed. "Ahem."

Fan Wenli smiled and said, "Director Zhang, it's been a while."

Zhang Ye was amused and said, "It hasn't been that long. We meet each other every week."

Chen Guang asked with great surprise, "Were all the songs that you sang onstage written by you?"

"Yes." Zhang Ye grinned and said, "Please excuse my poor writing."

Zhang Xia pointed at him and said, "You're just great! I never expected that it would be you! You even pretended to be a northeasterner? Pretended to be a Hong Konger? And even pretended to be Hokkien?"

Zhang Ye said awkwardly, "Grandma Zhang, that was because I didn't dare to reveal myself. The air pollution documentary problem hasn't been dealt with yet. I'm still banned, unlike all of you."

At this moment, Dong Shanshan suddenly rushed down from the stage to question him.

"You!" Dong Shanshan shouted at him loudly.

Zhang Ye rubbed his nose. "Yo, if it isn't Teacher Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan pointed at him and said, "When I called you that one time, I asked you if you were The Clown. You even denied it back then and swore that you were not him, didn't you?"

Zhang Ye smiled sheepishly. "Did I? I've forgotten already."

Li Xiaoxian laughed and said, "Was that song of yours really dedicated to Teacher Shanshan?"

Xiaodong exclaimed, "Didn't they explain it online? That Shanshan's birthday was not on that day?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "We've been classmates for so many years and were even seated in front and behind of each other, so how could I not know when her birthday is? Her recorded date of birth on her household register is the wrong date."

Dong Shanshan rolled her eyes. "Then why did you claim that I never told you about it before?"

Zhang Ye said innocently, "But it's true that you never told me about it. I only knew because I overheard when you were telling another classmate back in school."

Dong Shanshan asked, "...Then how did you suddenly learn how to sing?"

Zhang Ye laughed, "That's a secret."

Zhang Yuanqi also walked up to him and said with a smile, "How many favors do you owe me this time?"

Zhang Ye replied nervously, "Isn't one more than enough?"

Zhang Yuanqi said, "I guessed it was you."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "But you weren't very sure about it."

"Right, because I've heard you sing on the spot before," Zhang Yuanqi said.

Zhang Xia also remembered the day Zhang Ye wrote "Woman Flower" and sang it on the spot for her and Yuanqi backstage during the Spring Festival Gala. They really did not find anything flattering about his singing skill and voice at that time. Coupled with "A Letter to Home," which he sang on Beijing Television's Spring Festival Gala, no one had expected that Zhang Ye would

know how to sing. This was also the reason why no one thought of him as a possibility! As such, when everyone saw The Clown after he took off his mask, that shock was really too great to handle!

Over there!

The Beijing Television staff also rushed up to him all at once!

Dafei shouted, "Director Zhang!"

The moment Hou Ge came up to Zhang Ye, he gave him a bear hug. "How could it be you!"

Xiao Lu came over!

Hu Fei came over!

Han Qi also excitedly ran up to him!

"Teacher Zhang!"

"You were so amazing!"

"We were trying to guess who The Clown was! Why is it you! How could it possibly be you!"

"Did you really win?"

"I was wondering who could have written so many heaven-defying classics!"

Han Qi's eyes reddened a little as she got very excited at seeing her idol. "Teacher Zhang, I like every one of your songs! I love them to death!"

Zhang Ye looked at her and said with a smile, "Thank you, Little Han. Thanks for all your hard work these past several days." Then he gave the group a fist and palm salute. "Everyone, I'm sorry that I had to hide this from you. I was afraid that if my identity was exposed, the show would be dragged down by me, so I had to keep it a secret. If there's anything that I did wrong, I'll treat everyone to dinner as an apology at a later time! Haha!"

All of a sudden, someone wrapped their arms around Zhang Ye's

waist and lifted him up!

Then a lot of people from Beijing Television surrounded Zhang Ye and raised him up high!

They threw him up in the air!

They caught him!

They threw him up in the air again!

They caught him again!

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

"Cham-pi-on!"

Today!

He was a national sensation!

Chapter 1083: Zhang Ye's latest celebrity ranking?

The next day.

Sunday.

At his parents' house, Zhang Ye slept all the way until 10 in the morning.

After he had sent his parents home from the competition venue last night, he headed straight to bed and dozed off immediately for a full 11 hours of sleep. Over these past few days, he had become incredibly tired. It was much too tiring having to do the production, choose his songs, arrange music, practice his singing, record the show, and attend the live broadcast. He was just like a warrior who did not know what fatigue meant. Throughout the duration of the competition, he even experienced staying up for two days and nights in a row, as well as not succumbing to a fever of 40°C! It had been two months, and now the competition was finally over. When the tension he had been experiencing was released, he was immediately overcome with a heavy sense of fatigue that made him sleep until now.

His cell phone had run out of battery.

He rolled over and plugged it into the charger before turning his phone on, all without stepping out of his bed.

There were quite a few notifications of missed calls and messages received on his cell phone's display.

His old colleague, Ha Qiqi: "Director Zhang! Me, Zhang Zuo, Little Wang, and everyone else all saw the moment you got crowned champion onstage. Great job! Congratulations!"

Central TV Department 14's Director Yan Tianfei: "Teacher Zhang, you're really not being a bro here. Why didn't you let me know about such an important thing? Haha, I couldn't get through

to you, so I'm sending you this message to congratulate you. I thought that you'd really stopped doing things after getting banned and were really going to behave yourself from now on, hur hur. But seeing that you're back now, I'm relieved! You're still the same old Teacher Little Zhang that I knew, always going around and stirring up trouble every other day!

His university classmate, Yu Yingyi: "Old classmate, you're really on fire now! In the entire entertainment industry, you're the most popular one of all! When are you going to treat us to a meal? Quickly set a date! I can't wait!"

His old colleague, Tian Bin: "Old Zhang, do you intend to ascend to the Heavens!"

A-list movie star, Ning Lan: "Did you have to make such a big splash?"

His friends and colleagues all came to congratulate him and express their shock at the same time!

Zhang Ye was lying in bed and smiling as he read the messages, replying to them one by one.

For the entire morning, the Internet, newspapers, and news broadcasts were all reporting about The Clown and Zhang Ye, as well as King of Masked Singers. Admittedly, Zhang Ye's position was slightly more awkward since he was currently soft banned without any official statement or clarification from the authorities. Any news reports regarding him were also greatly controlled. However, yesterday's live broadcast had caused such a big stir that there was no one who did not know about it anymore. So the media couldn't possibly avoid not mentioning Zhang Ye's name and not report about it even if they wanted to!

"Curtains fall on King of Masked Singers: The Clown crowned champion!"

"Inconceivable! King of Masked Singers' The Clown's true

identity!"

"The Clown turns out to be Zhang Ye!"

"The Clown's 'I Am What I Am' send shockwaves through audience!"

"Zhang Ye performs another astonishing crossover!"

"A layman sweeps away the music industry!?"

"King of Masked Singers to hold live concert next week. Zhang Ye's appearance still unknown!"

"Our reporter inquires over the phone; authorities yet to make statement!"

"Zhang Ye—entertainment industry's professional 'shit stirrer'!"

"Watch out, music industry musicians! Here comes Zhang Ye!"

People throughout the country were still in a state of shock!

Fan Wenli had also taken her mask off yesterday, as did Li Xiaoxian. But as their identities had long since been speculated by the netizens, there didn't exist an element of surprise. However, no one had been able to guess The Clown's real identity all this time. Then there was also the fact that the name of Zhang Ye itself had always been a focal point, and his status was unlike Fan Wenli and Li Xiaoxian's, who were professional singers. A host, director, mathematician, and someone who meddled in the Chinese language had been crowned the grand champion of King of Masked Singers by taking down a series of professional singers like Fan Wenli, Li Xiaoxian, Zhao Qiquan, and many others. This made many of the industry insiders want to vomit blood! This was too unreasonable! Zhang Ye, did you intend to blast off from Earth?

Any topic related to Zhang Ye had always been this hotly debated!

He was truly the most wondrous person in show business. No one could predict what he would do next. Ever since his debut,

everything he did would always shock a group of people!

Just look!

It was no exception this time!

...

Outside, the door opened.

His parents came home in a laughing mood.

Zhang Ye quickly got out of bed and strolled into the living room.
"Dad, Mom, where did you go?"

"You just woke up?" His mother was grinning from ear to ear. She placed the plastic bags in her hands down. "Your dad and I went grocery shopping. I must cook some good dishes for you in the afternoon to celebrate!"

His father glanced at his wife and said, "What grocery shopping? Your mom went out early this morning to brag. She reached the market at 8 AM and started bragging the moment we bumped into every neighbor we saw. Look at the time now. It's already 11 AM."

His mother was having none of it. "What's wrong with me bragging about my son!"

His father threw his hands up and said, "Alright, alright, I didn't say that it was wrong."

His mother harrumphed. "My son is so popular. Why am I not allowed to tell others about it?"

His father pursed his lips at Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Mom, just go ahead and tell anyone you like; no one will stop you. Let's quickly eat lunch. I'm getting hungry already. I haven't had anything much to eat at all."

His mother immediately said, "Wait a bit, wait a bit. It'll be ready soon!" Just before stepping into the kitchen, she suddenly turned around and asked, "By the way, son, what's your popularity score

now? Where are you ranked?"

Zhang Ye was taken aback. "Oh, I would have forgotten if you hadn't mentioned it."

His mother urged, "Quickly go and check! You were at the last two places on the A-list rankings last time, but it should have changed by now! Go check and see how many spots you've advanced!"

Zhang Ye nodded. "Alright."

In recent days, his popularity score had been at a standstill while the celebrities behind him had kept increasing their popularity and were catching up to him. Like Li Yu, who had exposed his own identity on King of Masked Singers. He was close to returning to the A-list Celebrity Rankings once again. Meanwhile, Zhang Ye, who hadn't been appearing much onscreen and had few new works, had dropped to the last two spots on the A-list rankings. He was in a very precarious position. Yesterday's unmasking was a turning point for him as he finally did not need to worry about dropping back down to the B-list rankings. He would definitely advance in the rankings although he did not know by how many positions he would advance.

He quickly went back to his room and powered on his computer.

Zhang Ye typed in the address to the official website of the Celebrity Rankings Index and loaded the page.

But the page could not load.

"Please try again."

This notification was all that was on the page.

Zhang Ye refreshed the page.

The page was still unable to load!

What was happening?

Why couldn't he access the site?

He immediately went onto Weibo to check. Be it the netizens or the industry insiders, everyone was confused about what was going on.

"The Celebrity Rankings website is not loading?"

"I'm experiencing the same thing. Is there something wrong with my connection?"

"It's not your connection. The site has been inaccessible since midnight."

"Eh?"

"But that's not possible."

"This is the official website! Nothing like this has ever happened before!"

"Yeah, what's going on?"

"This has never happened in the past!"

"What's their technical team doing? We're at a crucial point in time right now!"

"I was hoping to check out Fan Wenli's popularity ranking!"

"I was waiting to see Zhang Ye's! He was about to drop off the A-list rankings the last time I checked!"

A lot of those in the entertainment industry were also waiting. The influence of King of Masked Singers was so widespread. Its songs dominated the Top Chinese Music Chart, and the popularity score gain it gave was also astonishing. Those involved in the show would always check their own rankings the following day to see if there were any changes in their rankings and how much their popularity scores had increased by. Even the celebrities and people from the talent agencies who did not have anything to do with the show would also check. They wanted to know if those who were on the show would have any changes in their ranking and whether they would be overtaken by them in the rankings!

Popularity was the lifeblood of a celebrity!

And this Celebrity Rankings Index was the lifechart of the entertainment industry!

...

This issue was also being discussed in the Goof Group.

Ning Lan: "It's still not out yet? It's still not loading?"

Huo Dongfang: "I don't know, perhaps something happened."

Chen Guang sent a sweating emoji. "On my lovely wife's request, I've been waiting up all night in the hopes of checking the rankings. I can wait no longer, so it's time to sleep."

Xiaodong appeared. "Hahaha, Brother Chen. You're truly a model husband!"

Amy: "I'm waiting for our Xiaoxian's ranking to come out. Hurry, hurry!"

A male star said: "This has never happened before in the many years it's existed, so what's going on today?"

...

Noon.

12 o'clock sharp.

There was finally an official announcement!

It was an announcement that dumbfounded the entire entertainment industry and the public!

The announcement was as follows:

Explanation regarding the temporary inaccessibility of the Celebrity Rankings Index Website: Due to the rising influence of a certain variety show in recent times, the data statistics of the Rankings Index have been affected to a certain extent. In addition, the popularity score of a certain celebrity has seen fluctuation on too wide of a scale. The amount of data collected has exceeded

more than what our systems can handle and this caused a temporary outage to our system. At the moment, our technical team is stepping in to rectify it as soon as possible. We sincerely apologize for inconveniencing everyone. We will be making another announcement when the Rankings Index is updated and returns to service.

A certain variety show?

Wouldn't that be King of Masked Singers?!

A certain celebrity?

Wouldn't that be Zhang Ye?!

When this announcement was made, everyone was dumbfounded!

On Weibo.

"What?"

"Zhang Ye's popularity score has greatly fluctuated? And it even crippled their systems?"

"Pfft, are they serious?"

"Why is it that everything that goes wrong has to do with Zhang Ye, hahaha!"

"Holy cow, just how much did Teacher Zhang's popularity score increase by! It even fucking crippled their systems?"

"That's nothing strange with that. When The Clown took his mask off yesterday, that was an instantaneous moment. Because of that, the system would have to transfer all of The Clown's popularity score from the previous month or so to Zhang Ye. Perhaps the data for that really did overflow! Pfft, Teacher Zhang is really great. He even brought down the Celebrity Rankings Index that had been operating fine for so long!"

"I'm cramping up from laughing!"

"Teacher Zhang is so mighty!"

"Teacher Zhang is so impressive!"

Suddenly, someone posted the poem that Zhang Ye recited at last night's grand finals!

"Life Fantasia."

Especially those last few lines. No matter how you looked at it, it was got the blood going!

Many of the netizens hadn't read Zhang Ye's poems in a long time, but it was still as domineering, earthshaking, and moving as ever.

I want to sing

a human song

that ages from now

will chorus through the universe.

The netizens started posting in the comments below.

"I like Zhang Ye so much!"

"His poems are always so awesome!"

"His songs as well!"

"Earth no longer has a place that can contain Zhang Ye!"

"Congratulations, Teacher Zhang. You're already blasting out into the universe!"

"The Celebrity Rankings Index website could even get crippled? I really have to take my hat off to Zhang Ye!"

The people in the industry didn't know how to react!

The website crashed?

It was Zhang Ye's fault?

Damn, just how much did your popularity score go up by this

time!

Chapter 1084: The first concert of its kind in the industry!

The next day.

The Celebrity Rankings Index website was still down.

The netizens were continuing to gloat over this problem.

"@ZhangYe!"

"You made a huge mess!"

"All the celebrity rankings have been wiped out because of you!"

"Teacher Zhang Ye, you've caused trouble again."

"Hahahahaha!"

"Pissing myself laughing, this is so funny!"

"Every time Zhang Ye does something, the entertainment industry experiences an earthquake!"

"I just like how this fellow always causes trouble wherever he goes!"

As the cause of the problem, Zhang Ye could only wryly smile!

What are you guys mentioning me for?

What the fuck has this got to do with me?

Quite a number of netizens were "blaming" him for it, but of course they were just joking.

The one thing that relieved Zhang Ye was that none of his music industry peers had scolded him this time around!

Wang Zhuishu's Weibo: "During the run of King of Masked Singers, my favorite singer was Petal Shower. But the one who sang best was definitely The Clown. That's something that anyone would admit!"

A female musician: "Zhang Ye is really the favored Son of Heaven! His music literacy is so good that you'd never believe that he isn't even a professional singer yet."

A lyricist: "No one has ever dared to sing only originals on any singing show. Only Zhang Ye would dare to do something like this! He's incredible. In the field of writing lyrics, there shouldn't be anyone who is a match for him!"

In the past, whenever Zhang Ye crossed over to a new industry, there would always be people calling him out. So those people from Zhang Ye's fan club were gearing up for a fight, ready to take on the industry peers in the music scene. But to their surprise, there was not even an opportunity to do so as no one scolded Zhang Ye at all! Instead, there was only praise all around!

...

At around 2 in the afternoon, the official website of the Celebrity Rankings Index was finally partially restored after being down for close to 40 hours.

The updated celebrity rankings were published!

Countless netizens and entertainment industry insiders anxiously came to check!

Fan Wenli's name glittered at the front of the B-list Celebrity Rankings. She was already in second place on the B-list rankings after her popularity score had increased by an unknown amount!

There were also changes to Li Xiaoxian's ranking. She shot to the middle of the B-list!

Spinach, Liao Yiqi, reached the front of the C-list rankings!

Flowing Time, Zhao Qiquan, also experienced quite an increase to his popularity score!

As the only host of the show, Dong Shanshan was almost within reach of the B-list!

Chen Guang, Yao Jiancai, Zhang Xia, and the others also skimmed some popularity off of King of Masked Singers. Their popularity had also grown, although it was not as much as those who took part in the show as contestants.

Only Zhang Yuanqi's ranking did not change, but that was because she had already reached the top. Being an S-list Heavenly Queen, this increase to her popularity score might have been a large increase for others, but it was only considered a minor change for her. Of course, it wasn't negligible, but it wasn't really that much either.

Everyone was happy!

For the celebrities who took part in King of Masked Singers, the celebration and revelry this time was all to the credit of Zhang Ye alone. Whether it was from the perspective of the show's production or the copyright of the show, this entire show was essentially Zhang Ye's baby. Using his show and the production to gain their current popularity, even if Flowing Time did have a conflict with The Clown and clashed with Zhang Ye's fan club after the competition ended, he didn't have any complaints—all for that reason alone. He could blame The Clown, but there wouldn't be any pointing of fingers at Zhang Ye!

On Weibo.

"Fan Wenli has risen in the rankings so quickly!"

"That's really fast! She's already second place on the B-list rankings?"

"She could even get to this position by purely singing? I guess it's only Fan Wenli who could do something like that, right?"

"Haha, Old Chen had better work harder. He's been overtaken by his wife!"

"Li Xiaoxian is really fearsome too!"

"Spring Garden is gonna blow up!"

"Yeah, all of the Spring Garden members are now B-list celebs. Put them together and there would simply be no competition! They deserve to be called the #1 girl group! Definitely one of the top ten in Asia!"

"Eh, where's Zhang Ye's name?"

"Damn, you're right!"

"Why isn't Zhang Ye's name listed?"

"There's no sign of him on the rankings at all!"

"I've also checked! His name really isn't there!"

The netizens all rushed to lodge complaints with the official website in an instant!

In the end, another announcement was made.

"Explanation regarding Zhang Ye's celebrity ranking: The system is currently undergoing maintenance to repair the statistics to recalculate Zhang Ye's popularity score. Our technical team will strive to complete the maintenance within the week."

Only his ranking was not fixed!

The system was not fully repaired yet!

"It's still not done?"

"I'm just waiting to see Zhang Ye's ranking!"

"I'm also waiting for it."

"They will get it fixed within the week?"

"Isn't the King of Masked Singers concert scheduled for this Saturday? Are they going to wait until then to calculate all of his data at once?"

"Anything that involves Zhang Ye always ends up a mess!"

"Zhang Ye has probably created history in the entertainment industry with that, hasn't he? Pfft!"

"I'm really looking forward to this weekend's concert!"

"I wonder what songs Zhang Ye will sing."

"Me too! I can't wait!"

"Looking forward to seeing Fan Wenli's performance!"

"How I wish I could attend the concert!"

"How can we get tickets? Or do they only give them out through a lottery?"

"Are there scalpers selling any?"

The topic gradually changed to the weekend concert!

Countless viewers were anticipating it highly as there had never before been a concert like this. This was going to be an unprecedented concert that no other variety show had put on before. It wasn't that the other singing shows did not want to hold one, but that they were not popular enough to do so. King of Masked Singers was the first to hold one and had booked an entire stadium that could hold tens of thousands of spectators!

It was the first in the industry!

The first in the entire country!

Beijing Television invited everyone from all walks of life to join in the celebration!

Of course, there was also a small issue here that everyone was worried about.

...

Beijing Television.

Hu Fei asked, "Have you guys sent it upstairs already?"

Hou Ge nodded. "Yes, but the SARFT did not make a single comment."

"Not a word?" Hu Fei was startled.

Hou Ge gave a wry smile. "Nothing."

Dafei blinked several times. "Then would that mean that Teacher Zhang can take part in the concert and it'll be fine? Is this how we should understand this?"

Hou Ge shook his head. "How would I know?"

Hu Fei felt that this was strange and was wondering about it. "Have you guys realized? In this past year, the SARFT's toward Little Zhang has changed a lot. They barely touch him anymore? Just think about it. I think the SARFT also did not issue any statements regarding the air pollution documentary incident? What's more, the air pollution documentary even managed to stay online for a few days! And there was that time when those associations issued a joint statement to make those changes but were chased away by Little Zhang with 'The Internationale.' The SARFT did not say anything and even criticized those associations for cooking up those nonsensical guidelines. All these incidents don't add up."

Xiao Lu added, "Now that you've brought it up, that's true."

Hou Ge said excitedly, "Then does that mean that Teacher Zhang's ban has been lifted?"

Hu Fei replied, "Not necessarily. Who knows? Since no one has said anything against it, we'll just go ahead with the concert arrangements! Everyone, start getting down to work. We must do well and make this first concert of its kind a success! Let's make it beautiful! We'll have the perfect finale for King of Masked Singers! None of you are allowed to screw this up!"

...

Back home.

Zhang Ye received a lot of calls to thank him.

The first call was from Fan Wenli.

"Thanks, Director Zhang."

"What are you thanking me for?"

"Your show, of course. Who else would I be thanking if not you?"

"Hur hur, you're welcome."

"See you at the concert this weekend."

Then came Liao Yiqi's call.

"Thank you, Teacher Zhang."

"You're welcome, Student Spinach."

"Hehe, I've mooched off of you this time. My popularity has grown by so much. An advertising company just approached me to give me an endorsement and offered me 3 million RMB straight up. I was stunned since I was never worth that much in the past."

"3 million isn't that much. You're really popular now, so I think you can still push for more."

"Eh?"

"Just take my advice."

"Alright then, I'll listen to you."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye smiled.

Since his popularity score hadn't been calculated yet, he stopped thinking about it. It was better to do something fruitful, like choosing a song for the concert. He definitely had to be well-prepared for it even though it was no longer a competition. Although he had already been crowned the champion, he was still not going to be sloppy about things. As long as it was related to work, Zhang Ye would take it seriously.

Which song then?

For this final song, what should he sing?

Chapter 1085: Piano playing coming from the room!

The next day.

The King of Masked Singers concert was getting hyped up!

Be it within the industry or to the audience, everyone was looking forward to that day. They were also anticipating what kind of finale The Clown, Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, Flowing Time, King of Oddity, Spinach, and the others would perform for the concert!

In the morning.

Zhang Ye got up and ate breakfast.

Ring, ring, ring.

The Clown's cell phone was ringing.

Zhang Ye was startled at first, then answered it. "Hello, Little Han?"

On the other end of the line, Han Qi said: "Good morning, Teacher Zhang."

Zhang Ye laughed and said: "Why are you still calling me on this cell phone?"

Han Qi said in embarrassment, "Ah, I got used to it and didn't notice. Teacher Zhang, Director Hu wanted me to inform you that the concert this weekend will proceed according to plan. You can take part in the concert since the SARFT did not raise any objections."

"Alright, I understand."

Han Qi said: "We found it quite strange. We were already prepared for an inquiry by the SARFT on this matter, but surprisingly, nothing came of it in the end."

Zhang Ye smiled. "Isn't that good?"

Han Qi asked: "Have you decided on the song that you'll be singing? When can you start rehearsing?"

Zhang Ye thought about it. "I haven't decided yet. I'll contact you again within the next two days."

Why didn't the authorities say anything?

They did not know what the reason was, but Zhang Ye did.

His mother looked at him. "Are they pressing you for the song that you'll be singing at the concert?"

Zhang Ye grunted in affirmation.

His mother asked with interest, "Are you ready? What song will you be singing? Are you going to sing another song for me and your dad? That 'I Really Love You' was quite a good song."

Zhang Ye coughed and said, "Probably not? I still haven't decided on what to sing after thinking about it all last night. I still need to give it some thought." However, Zhang Ye wanted to handle something else right now. He had to take his mind off the concert for a while. "Dad, Mom, I need to go out after lunch. I won't be coming home for dinner tonight."

"Where are you running off to now?"

"I'm going out to buy a piano."

"Do we have any space for that at home?"

He had something that he wanted to do.

It was something that was very important to him.

...

Later that morning.

In a piano shop without many customers.

The shop was rather empty. Other than the female manager,

there was no one else around at the moment.

A young man wearing a pair of sunglasses and a surgical mask pushed open the door and walked in. "Hello, do you have a piano for sale? I'm looking for a decent one."

The female manager nonchalantly looked up and suddenly screamed, "Ahhhhhhhhhhh!"

Zhang Ye was frightened. "Whoa, what's the matter?"

The female manager seemed to have seen a ghost. "Zhang Ye! You are Zhang Ye!"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "You can even recognize me like this?"

The female manager blurted out, "I've been following King of Masked Singers every week! I can recognize you even if you turn to ashes!" Then, probably realizing that it sounded a little inappropriate, she quickly said, "Aiyo, I love you to death! You sang so well! You want to buy a piano? You don't have to pay! I'll give you a piano for free! You can choose from any of the pianos in the shop."

Zhang Ye waved her off. "How could that do?"

The female manager said in embarrassment, "It's alright, just... let me take a picture with you to put in our shop. Consider it promotion for us."

Zhang Ye smiled at that and said, "How about this? I'll pay for the piano and also take a picture with you, that OK?"

The female manager immediately said, "That would be great. Is the piano a gift for someone or yourself? Let me recommend you the best piano we have in our shop. Although it's a bit expensive, but hai, it's not like you're poor or anything. Come, come. What do you think of this piano? It's a high-end one; I wouldn't sell it to just anyone." Whether she was usually this talkative or just excited to see him, Zhang Ye didn't know. He just listened to her chatter away anyway.

Finally, he selected the piano he wanted.

"Where should I deliver it? Please write down an address for us."

"You don't have to deliver it. I need it today, so can you get someone to help me tie it up on my car?"

"Ah? What kind of a car do you have?"

"A BMW X5."

"But there's no way to fit it in there."

"Just secure it on top of the car."

"How can that do? Your car will get scratched."

"It's a bulletproof car. You won't be able to scratch it."

"Uh, th-then I'll get someone to give it a try."

The female manager knew that a big shot like Zhang Ye would not be willing to let others know his address, so she wasn't exactly surprised at this and immediately went to find someone.

...

Evening.

6 PM.

Wu Zeqing had just gotten off from work and was walking out of the office building.

"Chief Wu."

"You're leaving?"

"Chief Wu, take care."

"It's been hard on you, Chief Wu."

Wu Zeqing nodded at them with a smile. "You guys knock off early when you finish working."

A department supervisor walked quickly to her and said with an anguished look, "Chief Wu, about the list for the concert that was

submitted by King of Masked Singers—"

Wu Zeqing waved it off and said, "It's already been decided. Don't bring it up anymore."

The supervisor said nervously, "But Chief Chen seems to—"

"If he has any problems, get him to come and look for me," Wu Zeqing said calmly.

"Oh, alright then."

Secretary Bai Li quickly caught up with her. "Chief Wu, you can't drive your car today, right? I'll send you home."

Wu Zeqing nodded. "OK."

In the car.

Bai Li blinked and said, "What are you having for dinner tonight?"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "I'll just go home and fix something up for dinner. Since I'm eating alone, I can make do with anything."

Bai Li instinctively asked, "You're still single?" Then she realized her slip of the tongue. "Oh, look at me, I always ask about things that I shouldn't be asking. Please don't take it to heart."

Wu Zeqing smiled. "You've been working for me for a year. Why are you still so restrained?"

Bai Li laughed and said, "Because you're the boss."

They arrived at Wu Zeqing's place.

Bai Li said, "I'll be going then, Chief Wu."

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Alright, thank you."

She turned around and walked into the villa's yard in her high heels. She had a glance at the flowers in the yard and thought that they looked quite beautiful. Walking to the front door, she took out her keys to open the door and bent down to change into her

slippers.

It was the same thing every day.

It was the same routine every day.

Opening the door.

Changing into her slippers.

Opening the refrigerator.

Making dinner.

Except something different happened today!

The moment Wu Zeqing closed the door, she could hear piano playing coming from upstairs!

She didn't have a piano at home!

There shouldn't be anyone in her house!

Old Wu looked up to the second floor and was stunned for a moment. Then she headed straight for the upstairs.

The sound of the piano was very soothing.

The melody sounded really nice too.

All of a sudden, a voice softly drifted out in the room.

It was a man's voice!

It was a very clean male voice 1 !

"I have loved, and also lost.

"Tasted the sweet and tart parts of love.

"Escaped from the irony of fate.

"I know what I want.

"There is an indescribable state.

"Created by all emotions thereof.

"Why ponder the meaningless cost?

"What in this world is there to be proud of."

Wu Zeqing walked up the stairs.

The sound of the piano was getting closer and closer!

The singing was also getting closer and closer!

The man sang loudly.

"If I'm without you,

"I keep my eyes on the distant peaks!

"But miss the turn on the track!

"Suddenly I looked back!

"I found you waiting for me, you were always there!

"I searched down in the seas of pitch black!

"And ignored the meandering rivers!

"When I found myself going against the tide!

"You were at my side, pushing me on!"

The door to the study was ajar.

Wu Zeqing stood at the door. Seeing the man at the piano, she didn't know what to do for a moment. Where did the piano come from? What was with this song?

The man sitting at the piano was Zhang Ye!

Zhang Ye continued to play.

"I know that I am very rich.

"Because love fulfills all.

"Every hole in my life.

"You've filled them with your sincerity.

"Right now.

"From this moment on.

"I want to hold you in my arms.

"And give you twice the affection.

"I want to sing a love song dedicated to you!

"So please listen!"

Old Wu.

This song is dedicated to you!

Actually, I've wanted to sing you a song since a long, long time ago. But there just wasn't a chance to do so. I will only ever sing this song for you. Thank you for not leaving me when I was most down and out. Thank you for always staying by my side!

As everyone knows, I'm not someone who usually speaks seriously and I don't know how to express what I really want to say. There are some things that I just can't put into words.

So, please, let me sing for you!

Zhang Ye sang in the tenor range.

"I kept my eyes on the distant peaks!

"But missed the turn on the track!

"Suddenly I looked back!

"I found you waiting for me, you were always there!

"I searched down in the seas of pitch black!

"And ignored the meandering rivers!

"When I found myself going against the tide!

"You were at my side, pushing me on!"

...

Outside the villa.

A neighbor opened their window in shock.

A lady driving home stopped her car in the neighborhood and

rolled down the window with a stunned look!

Who's playing the piano?

Who's singing?

Why haven't I heard this song before?

It sounds really nice!

Isn't this song way too good?

That lady and several of the closer neighbors were visibly moved by what they heard!

Just who are you?

Who...are you singing for?

Chapter 1086: Old Wu wants to attend the concert too?

In the neighborhood.

It echoed with the melodious notes of a piano.

The piano is one of the very few instruments that do not require a power source or connection to any audio equipment to be heard inside a large enclosed space or concert hall. Of course, it would have to be a grand piano meant for such venues to achieve that. On this note, both the cello and the violin cannot achieve the same sound amplification of a mechanical percussive transmission ¹. Although the piano that Zhang Ye bought was an upright piano, its sound amplification was still quite outstanding. However, once in an open space, the sound of the piano would diffuse a little.

Several neighbors in the vicinity of Old Wu's villa could vaguely hear a man singing. Although the singing could not be heard further out in the neighborhood, the faint sound of a piano playing still managed to float out to their ears.

The security guards at the neighborhood's entrance turned around in shock!

The residents of the neighborhood stopped in their tracks!

A lot of people were attracted to the sound of the piano and got enchanted by it!

He finished singing.

The sound of the piano gradually drifted away.

Everyone was looking around for the source of the music.

"Where did it come from?"

"Which house did the playing come from?"

"Was it a sound system?"

"No, it must've been played on an actual piano!"

"Who could be so talented?"

"Does our neighborhood have someone so talented?"

...

At Old Wu's residence.

In the upstairs study.

After he played the final note, Zhang Ye took his hands off the keys and put the fallboard down. Then he smiled at Wu Zeqing.

Wu Zeqing looked at him. "What's the title of this song?"

Zhang Ye said, "'You Were Always There.'"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Is it for me?"

"Yes. What do you think of it?" Zhang Ye wasn't sure if Old Wu liked it.

Wu Zeqing smiled and asked, "I like it very much. When did you learn how to play the piano? When were you able to sing that well? Hmm?"

Zhang Ye gave a hearty laugh and said, "Hai, please don't mind those small details."

"Did you just buy this piano?"

"Yep. I bought it this morning, then drove it here. It was really quite heavy and nearly crushed my car. Fortunately, I own a bulletproof car and the frame is a special make as well."

"You didn't get someone to deliver it?"

"I was afraid that they might know where you live."

"So you carried this piano into the house and upstairs all by yourself?"

"Yeah, this weighs nothing."

Zhang Ye started boasting.

Wu Zeqing pointed at the upright piano. "A piano that weighs three to four hundred pounds, and you carried it up here all by yourself?"

"Of course." Zhang Ye boasted shamelessly, "Even if it were two pianos stacked on top of each other, I could still carry them up here." These words of his were merely meant for boasting.

In reality, it had taken all of Zhang Ye's strength to carry in this piano that weighed 300-odd pounds. This was even with him having martial arts and already maxing out on the Fruits of Strength and Stamina from the Lottery Draw (One). It was just that Old Wu had not seen how much effort it took for this fellow to carry it in earlier, so he started bragging about being able to carry two pianos by himself now. 700, 800 pounds? Even if this fellow had used his concealed power, he still would not be able to carry them. Besides, concealed power was not meant to be used in such a way. It was an instantaneous kind of power that could only be used for destroying, not for carrying things.

Wu Zeqing smiled.

Zhang Ye probably thought that he had bragged by too much, as he quickly changed the subject. "Old Wu, have a seat. Are you angry at me about this matter?"

Wu Zeqing saw that his collar was slightly crumpled, probably from carrying the piano earlier. It was also a little dirty, so she reached out and straightened it for him and patted off the dust. "Why would I be angry with you?"

Zhang Ye stood still and let her adjust it for him. "Because I didn't tell you that I went to participate in King of Masked Singers. Actually, it's not that I didn't want to tell you. In fact, I had wanted to tell only you about it. In the end, I was just too embarrassed to bring it up after a long hesitation the other day. The main issue was that I'd never sung before. As it was my first time singing onstage and this being such a huge competition, it would've been

really embarrassing if I lost by the second episode. So I thought it might be better not to say anything about it at first and only tell you about it after I became the champion. So here I am, immediately coming to seek your forgiveness after I got crowned grand champion. I practiced the song that I just sang for you for a very long time."

Wu Zeqing said gently, "I couldn't be any happier for you, so why would I be angry with you? You're really in the limelight this time. Not bad, you didn't make me ashamed."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "That's true."

"Take off your shirt. I'll wash it for you later since it's dirty," Wu Zeqing said.

"OK." He did not stand on ceremony.

"Are you hungry?"

"Not yet."

"We'll eat in a bit?"

"Sure."

"Then do something for me first."

"Oh? What is it?"

Wu Zeqing did not say anything and searched around the study. She took out the four treasures of the study 2 and immediately began to grind the ink. Then she said, "Write down the lyrics of the song that you just sang for me. I can't remember them after listening to them just once. When you're done writing, I'll hang it and read it at my own leisure."

Zhang Ye immediately said, "That's not a problem."

"I've prepared the ink."

"How would you like me to write it?"

"How many scripts do you know?"

"I can write it in regular, semi-cursive, clerical, or cursive script."

He thought about saying how he could also write in " Microsoft YaHei 3 " if he wanted to, but Old Wu would surely not understand what he meant by that.

Old Wu smiled and said, "How about semi-cursive. I like your semi-cursive."

"Alright!" Zhang Ye immediately began writing.

A set of lyrics was written down in a free-flowing motion.

Wu Zeqing held up the Xuan paper for it to dry and took a look. The more she looked at it, the more she liked it.

As she gazed at the calligraphy, Zhang Ye looked at her. Since it was summer, Old Wu was dressed lightly and looked especially elegant in the thin, classic qipao. The more he looked at her, the more he liked her.

All of a sudden, Old Wu looked up and said, "Oh yeah, I've got something to tell you. Your ban will officially be lifted today. Although the SARFT won't be issuing any notices or documentation about it nor will there be any announcements to the public, there won't be a restriction on any news and shows related to you anymore. In fact, your ban was scheduled to be lifted soon, but King of Masked Singers expedited the process. You've caused such a big ruckus that they were unable to keep the ban on you for longer, even if they wanted. So they might as well use the opportunity to lift your ban. Even though there are still some people in the organization who are opposed to it, I've taken care of them, so it's not going to be a big deal. And there might be some flexibility given to the air pollution documentary. With some editing, I think there could be some hope that it gets re-released to the public. I will be following up on this matter."

He had been unbanned?

This bro had regained his freedom?

This was no doubt the happiest news Zhang Ye had heard in recent days!

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Thanks, Old Wu."

Wu Zeqing said, "You fought for this. It has nothing much to do with me. You've been crowned grand champion of King of Masked Singers and even took your mask off during the live broadcast. Did you think you would stay banned after all that? Furthermore, your songs were very good too. That's one of the most crucial factors as you have quite a few songs that were full of positivity. For example, 'Strive Hard to Succeed,' 'Life's More Than the Grind,' and 'I Really Love You.' All of those songs were a great help in changing your image. So there's no need to thank me as you were the one who grabbed this opportunity. Without this show, you might have needed to wait at least another month or two before your ban was lifted."

Zhang Ye blinked and said, "'The Internationale' is also a very inspirational song."

He personally liked the song a lot!

On that day, he vented most of his anger after he sang it!

On that day, the feeling of having everyone stand up and sing loudly along with him was just so satisfying!

Wu Zeqing looked at him. "Don't mention that song. Do you know how big of a mess it created?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Alright, I understand. I won't sing it much in the future."

Wu Zeqing asked, "How are your preparations for the concert going?"

Zhang Ye said, "Hai, I still haven't decided what song to sing yet."

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Take your time, there's no need to hurry. Any song that you sing will definitely be good."

Zhang Ye especially liked hearing that and could feel a warmth in his chest. He really had never come across a woman like Old Wu before. It was as though Old Wu found whatever he did to be good and would always give him her support. Furthermore, Old Wu would never broach further on a subject if it was something he did not wish to speak about or preferred to keep secret. She always gave him a lot of space and respect in that regard. She was always beside him, supporting him and encouraging him on his journey.

Wu Zeqing suddenly asked, "Do you have any tickets for the concert left?"

Zhang Ye was surprised. "Of course. Why?"

Wu Zeqing smiled. "I would like to attend in person and listen to you sing."

"You really want to go?"

"Yes, I want to go there in my own personal capacity."

"Although the broadcast is on Saturday, the recording is scheduled for Friday afternoon. You don't have to work?"

"I'll take the day off. My fiancé will be staging a concert. Even if the sky falls, I must go."

Just look at the way she put it!

Zhang Ye loved hearing it!

"Alright! I'll get a ticket for you. It'll definitely be a front row seat!"

"That's not necessary. I'm fine with sitting wherever."

"That won't do. You won't be able to see me if you're seated too far away."

Thinking about how Wu Zeqing would also be there on that day to listen to him sing, Zhang Ye was suddenly quite looking forward to it. At the same time, he also felt a little more nervous about it. He suddenly thought of a song and knew exactly what he would be

singing at the concert.

It was a very nice song.

It was a song about one's ideals.

Chapter 1087: The concert begins!

Friday.

In the afternoon.

There was a sea of people at the Beijing Stadium.

"Where are the Fan Wenli fans?"

"Zhao Qiquan's fans, please gather under the billboard!"

"Over here!"

"Here!"

"Come with me!"

"Where are the Zhang Ye fans?"

"Coming!"

"We're here!"

"Hurry, it's time to distribute the items!"

"Glow sticks for everyone! They're free!"

"Don't buy from those people out there. They're so expensive!"

Even before entering the stadium, the bustle outside was spectacular. Vehicles had already occupied all of the underground parking garage spots and roads around the venue. There were no more free spots and the roads were no longer accessible other than the one that was leading west toward the suburbs. The roads in the other three directions were jam-packed. At the entrance, it was as though the entire population of Beijing's merchants and peddlers were gathered here. There were people selling celebrity posters, glow sticks, scalped tickets, and even the King of Masked Singers contestants' "genuine" autographs. The media outlets' vehicles also arrived one after another!

It was a flurry of activity!

The place was heating up!

...

On Weibo.

The netizens also made a racket.

"Who still has tickets for the concert?"

"It's beginning soon! I can't wait!"

"Haha, I'm already at the venue and waiting to get admitted."

"Previous poster, bragging like this will only end up with you getting beaten up!"

"How I wish I could go and watch them perform live! Especially Zhang Ye's songs. Why do I like him so much! I wonder what song he'll sing today!"

"Our Xiaoxian is quite good too!"

"Everyone knows that Zhang Ye is good at writing songs, but I'm still finding it difficult to accept that the guy can also sing this well!"

"It's impossible to measure a person like him with common sense."

"He was born to be a star!"

"You're wrong. Zhang Ye wasn't born to be one."

"Yeah, he was never meant to be a celebrity at all. He had to fight so hard to be where he is now. This has been a very difficult journey for Teacher Zhang Ye, and everyone knows that! I wonder how he has managed to survive for this long! I heard that the SARFT has not said anything either this time and allowed Zhang Ye to take part in the concert. Does that mean that Zhang Ye has been unbanned? I'm so happy for him!"

"Yeah!"

"The ban has finally been lifted!"

...

Inside the stadium.

The singers had already arrived for some time.

There were not only Zhang Ye, Fan Wenli, and those other singers who had taken part in the King of Masked Singers competition. Even Chen Guang, Zhang Xia, Amy, Celery, and several other celebrity guests were also backstage and getting ready for the concert. They too would be taking part in the concert today.

Executive Director Hu Fei said, "We've been preparing for this concert for quite some time now. We practically started preparing for it since the broadcast of the first episode and had the stadium booked since that time. The entire country's attention is on us now, so I hope we can make this industry's first concert based on a variety show a great success. I'll leave all that to you, so let's execute this beautifully." With a pause, he reminded them, "By the way, there's something else to note. It wasn't reported on yesterday's weather forecast, but this morning's forecast predicted that there could be rain today. So, everyone, please be aware of this possibility."

Hou Ge came over to look for him. "Director Hu, we need you over at the stage."

Hu Fei nodded, then said to the other staff members, "I'm going to the front for a bit. If there's anything urgent over here, ask Director Zhang for advice. He can take charge of the things here."

Xiao Lu replied, "Yes, sir!"

Han Qi replied, "Understood!"

Everyone responded in kind, thinking it was a matter of course.

However, Zhang Ye did not seem to care for anything right now. He lowered his head and continued texting.

Zhang Ye: "Are you here yet?"

Wu Zeqing: "I just arrived. There was a traffic jam."

"Zhang Ye: "Are you lining up to get in yet?"

Wu Zeqing: "Yes, I'm passing through security now."

Zhang Ye: "Let me get someone to bring you in."

Wu Zeqing: "There's no need. Don't alarm too many people. Most of your staff knows who I am, so it's better for me to keep a low profile. After all, I'm here in my own personal capacity today."

Zhang Ye: "OK."

Chen Guang came over. "Director Zhang, who're you chatting with?"

Zhang Ye looked up and smiled. "What's up?"

Fan Wenli looked at her husband. "Stay away. Don't come over here and try to pry any information from us."

Chen Guang yelled, "Must I, Wenli?"

Li Xiaoxian also smiled. "We belong to different camps today."

Amy rolled her eyes. "Teacher Chen, let's give our best and sing well today. We'll stamp them down!"

Chen Guang harrumphed. "Alright!"

Zhang Xia laughed and shook her head. "You people."

Today's opening song was going to be an explosive and attention-stealing showdown between the contestants and the celebrity guests. Each side was a team, the contestants' team versing the celebrity guests' team. Everyone was looking forward to this matchup. Just look. Even before going onstage, the competitiveness from both sides was picking up.

Half an hour later.

People gradually filled the stadium.

In the blink of an eye, the seats were packed with over ten thousand people!

Some of the audience members were shouting their favorite celebrities' names, some were holding up LED lightboards and waving them around, while others were bursting into songs performed on King of Masked Singers.

"Sunset Glow!"

"The Clown!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Petal Shower!"

"I am what I am! / A firework of different colors!"

"Why is the concert still not beginning?"

"I can't waaaait!"

The scenes were very chaotic!

The audience was reaching a fever pitch!

Wu Zeqing finally got into the stadium at this point in time. She found her way to the second row of front row seats and checked her ticket to find her seat. As she made her way across the row, she smiled warmly. "Excuse me, coming through."

But a little ways in, someone called out to her.

It was a middle-aged married couple.

"Hey! President Wu?"

"President Wu!"

The couple looked at her, startled.

Wu Zeqing turned around in confusion and asked, "You two are?"

Zhang Ye's mother stood up excitedly. "I am Zhang Ye's mother!"

Wu Zeqing said, "Oh, it's Auntie."

His father asked, "Why are you also here?"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Well, I'm off today. So I came to watch the concert."

"Aiyo, thank you so much for taking care of our Little Ye. You've helped him a lot. We've been wanting to visit you to express our thanks, but we just didn't have the chance to do so," his mother said.

Wu Zeqing said, "Auntie, you're too kind."

His mother immediately said, "Sit here with us, sit. Little Ye gave us three tickets, but we have an empty seat now because his cousin was unable to make it."

Wu Zeqing thought over the offer for a moment, then smiled and sat down. "Alright."

His mother was very enthusiastic. "President Wu, wait, I should be addressing you as Chief Wu instead."

Wu Zeqing immediately said, "Don't call me that, Auntie. You can just call me Little Wu."

"That would be so inappropriate."

"It's not."

"Hur hur, can I really call you that?"

"Of course."

And so, Wu Zeqing started chatting together with Zhang Ye's parents, talking and laughing throughout their conversation.

Taking some time out, Wu Zeqing quietly sent a message to Zhang Ye. "I've found a seat, I'm sitting together with your parents."

Very quickly, she got a reply. "Ah???"

Wu Zeqing: "Hur hur, I've wanted to meet your parents for a while now. What a coincidence. I won't be replying anymore. I

want to chat some more with your parents."

Zhang Ye: "sweats OK."

At this moment, the host, Dong Shanshan, came out!

When the crowd saw her, they gave her warm applause immediately!

"She's here!"

"It's starting!"

Dong Shanshan announced, "Welcome, everyone, to King of Masked Singers, brought to you by our sponsor, Bright Fruit Cocoa. I'm your host, Dong Shanshan. How are all of you?"

The audience cheered in response!

After a slew of opening remarks, the main event finally kicked off.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Backstage today, there was so much going on. Two groups of people nearly clashed, with one side claiming that they could sing really well, while another side claimed that they could sing even better. They bickered so much that when I was asked to give my opinion on who was better, I was too scared to answer. I believe that we should let our audience decide!"

Clashed?

Hahaha!

The audience chuckled!

Dong Shanshan said, "Next, let's welcome the All-Stars onto the stage to perform 'I Believe 1' for everyone!" She handed over the stage.

Applause thundered!

The music started playing!

Spinach, Liao Yiqi, took her microphone and went out onto the

stage. "I wanna fly to the sky, walk beside the Sun. The world waits for me to change it!"

At the other end of the stage, Zhang Xia appeared and sang, "Never been afraid of others seeing my dreams. Here, I can make it happen!"

Back on other side, Fan Wenli strode onto stage. "Laughing loudly, let's walk side by side. Isn't happiness everywhere!"

At the other end, Amy appeared. "Casting off all worries, I stride forward bravely. Now I am taking center stage!"

Li Xiaoxian: "I believe I'm me, I trust tomorrow!"

Celery: "I believe that youth has no limits."

Zhang Ye appeared. "Whether sunset at the beach or the crowded streets, it's the prettiest paradise for me."

Chen Guang sang loudly, "I believe in freedom. I believe in hope! I believe I can reach out and touch the sky!"

They sang altogether.

"With you by my side!

"Life is more exciting!

"Every moment so wonderful!

"I do believe!"

The contestants were in one group!

The celebrity guests were in another group!

They sang one line one after the other as they appeared and took the stage!

The two groups of people were apparently competing, trying to outdo and outsing the person before them!

The atmosphere in the stadium flash ignited!

Screams!

Shouts!

Clouds darkened the skies as the multicolored glow sticks started to come to life!

This song was the theme song for The Voice. Back then, Zhang Yuanqi, Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, and Fan Wenli sang it together. Zhang Ye wrote this song!

Chapter 1088: 'Vast Horizons'!

The audience reached a fever pitch!

In the open-air stadium, the screaming sounded like it was piercing through the upper atmosphere!

"Awesome!"

"What a star-studded event!"

"All of them sang great!"

"The song was well-written in the first place!"

"That's for sure. This song was written by Zhang Ye himself!"

"Chen Guang's singing is a force to be reckoned with!"

"I still prefer Zhang Ye a bit more."

"The two of them don't have the same style. Old Chen is better at explosive singing while Zhang Ye focuses more on emotional singing."

"Get lost. Zhang Ye is also very good at explosive singing. Can anyone replicate that last scream in 'Exaggerated'?"

"If you wanna put it that way, then Old Chen is also good at emotional songs!"

"Fuck, what are you two arguing for?"

"Haha, as to which of those two can sing better, they have to fight it out onstage for us to find out. We won't know from the song that they just sang."

The first song ended.

The audience applauded them!

Zhang Ye's mother was also furiously clapping in the audience.
"Great! Great! C'mon, son!"

His father gave her a tug and chin-nodded in Wu Zeqing's

direction. "Calm down a little, will you?" He was reminding her that the executive of the organization that oversaw the entertainment industry was sitting beside her.

But his mother did not care. "Little Wu, who do you think sang better?"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Zhang Ye sang the best."

His mother said happily, "Oh, you think so too?"

Wu Zeqing replied, "Mhm. I like his songs very much and feel that every one of them is good."

At that, his mother grabbed Wu Zeqing's hands with a sense of familiarity and felt that she was becoming more and more pleasing to the eye. She started chattering to her again. "Did you know? This kid's music genes all come from me!"

Wu Zeqing nodded. "Yes, I can see that."

His father nearly vomited a mouthful of blood.

Onstage, it was time for Fan Wenli's performance.

When she came out onstage, the applause went up by several decibels!

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

Everyone was still used to chanting her stage name!

The next to take the stage was Flowing Time.

Followed by Spinach.

Sunset Glow.

And King of Oddity.

The singers came out one after another!

The screaming and shouting at the venue came wave after wave!

They were midway through the concert when the skies turned

even gloomier. Dark clouds blocked the moon and faint roars of thunder could be heard. It seemed like it was going to rain.

Right at this moment, The Clown took the stage!

Many of the audience members were shaken!

Some of them were very tired from clapping so much. But when they saw Zhang Ye, they started applauding again, crazy over him!

Some of Zhang Ye's diehard fans even stood up and waved Zhang Ye's LED lightboards excitedly as they screamed his name!

His mother exclaimed, "It's my son's turn! My son!"

His father stared at the stage without blinking.

Wu Zeqing watched him as he walked onto the stage, quietly waiting for his performance today.

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

Fan Wenli and Chen Guang came to the front of the stage.

Liao Yiqi silently came out as well.

Zhang Xia, Li Xiaoxian, and Amy did the same.

When everyone saw each other, they smiled at one another.

"What are you guys doing out here?"

"The feels aren't the same backstage."

"I'm curious about what song he'll singing."

They were all looking forward to hearing Zhang Ye's song today, so they came to the front to listen. This was because every song Zhang Ye sang was a song that they had never heard before. It was always going to be a surprise for them!

...

Zhang Ye was already standing in his spot onstage.

Eight, nine cameras were focused on him!

Over ten thousand audience members were looking at him!

Zhang Ye swept his eyes over them and spotted Wu Zeqing in the crowd. He also saw his parents, Fan Wenli and Chen Guang, Grandma Zhang Xia, and the many pairs of eyes of the audience!

All of a sudden, the music played.

Snowflakes started drifting around.

These were "snowflakes" generated by the machine at the side of the stadium.

A lot of people were mesmerized by the effect of the snowflakes floating around.

But then, a voiceover played through the stadium.

A man's voice: "Zhang Ye, you won't be able to become famous the way you are."

Another man's voice: "This path is not suitable for you, please go back."

A woman's voice: "You want to be a celebrity with that temper of yours? Who would like you? Ha!"

A middle-aged man's voice: "Zhang Ye, you're fired. Go pack your things and leave!"

The lonely snowflakes gently drifted down!

Wu Zeqing was stunned!

Zhang Ye's parents were stunned!

Zhang Xia was stunned!

Fan Wenli was stunned!

Han Qi's eyes reddened!

Just those few lines of the voiceover were enough to stun everyone!

Zhang Ye opened his eyes and reached out. He tried to grab some of the snowflakes but was unable to catch any.

He sighed, then lightly sang 1 .

"Tonight, I saw snow drift through the cold sky.

"With a cooled off heart, I drifted far away.

"Chasing you in the storm.

"Can't tell shadows apart in the fog.

"You and I in these vast horizons.

"Can we change?"

This is what my life has been.

Today, I will sing it out for all of you to listen to.

He took two steps forward and looked at everyone as he sang.

"Many times, I've been scorned and ridiculed.

"But never have I abandoned my ideals.

"In a fleeting trance.

"I felt something was missing.

"Unaware, it faded away.

"My passion."

The choir accompaniment sang, "Who understands me?"

Who can understand him?

Which of us here...can understand him?

Li Xiaoxian gasped!

Flowing Time fell silent!

Listening to him sing, Amy was dumbfounded!

Zhang Ye suddenly sang loudly.

"Forgive me for always loving freedom and indulging.

"I'm afraid I might fall someday too.

"Discarding one's ideals.

"Anyone can do.

"Why would I be afraid if it's just you and me?"

The audience had forgotten how to speak!

They had forgotten how to clap!

Everyone was just staring dumbfounded at the onstage Zhang Ye.

At this moment, the voiceover began anew.

A man's voice: "Give it up, you won't be able to make it!"

Another man's voice: "Hurry up and go back home!"

A woman's voice: "Ha, how far do you think you can make it to with what you have?"

A middle-aged man's voice: "You want to say whatever you want to say? You want to sing whatever you want to sing? Do you think you make the decisions around here? Art? Don't talk to me about art! Just hurry up and kick yourself out of here! Let me tell you this: A person like you, no one in the entire entertainment industry would ever take a liking to you!

The audience's mood was restrained to the extreme!

His mother felt a niggling sense of uneasiness!

Zhang Xia and the others also felt like there was something heavy weighing on their chests!

They knew that these were the past events Zhang Ye had experienced!

But the very next moment!

The music soared!

The guitar sped up the tempo!

The drums also turned up the heat!

Zhang Ye's expression changed as he pointed up to the sky suddenly and sang.

"I am still who I am!

"Forever singing as I please!

"Wherever!

"I go!"

With that, the stadium erupted!

His father stood up from his seat!

His mother stood up with tears in her eyes!

Wu Zeqing stood up as well!

Every one of the audience members started screaming wildly!

They had been moved!

They had been stunned!

Liao Yiqi's tears flowed without end. "Well done! Teacher Zhang, good on you!"

Zhang Ye shout-sang.

"Forgive me for always loving freedom and indulging!

"I'm afraid I might fall someday too!

"Discarding one's ideals! Anyone can do!

"Why would I be afraid if it's just you 'n' me!"

You all can insult me, underestimate, or even scold me. All of that is fine!

Just give up on me!

But I won't give up on myself!

Even if everyone in this world discarded their ideals!

Zhang Ye suddenly turned to where Wu Zeqing was and looked into her eyes.

"Discarding one's ideals, anyone can do!

"Why would I be afraid if it's just you and me!"

He smiled.

And then she smiled.

Even if there were only the two of them left on this road.

At least I still have you!

At least you'll still be right by my side!

Chapter 1089: Do you guys really want to keep listening?

The audience in the stadium was going crazy!

"This is Zhang Ye!"

"This is who he is!"

"Zhang Ye! I love you!"

"The Clown, you're the best!"

"You still have me!"

"Right, you still have us!"

"We'll walk together with you down this road!"

"Count me in!"

"There's me too! Count all of us in!"

"Why would I be afraid if it's just you and me!"

I am still who I am!

Forever singing as I please!

These couple of lines in the lyrics had made everyone's blood surge with passion!

This was a song by Beyond. This was a song from Zhang Ye's previous world that could be considered one of the most classic and greatest songs of all.

It was called " Vast Horizons 1 ."

...

Outside the stadium.

In a nearby neighborhood.

"Hear that? What's that sound?"

"It's going to rain soon. Let's hurry and get back home."

"Uh, what's this shouting that's coming from that direction?"

"The stadium? Is there a match going on today?"

"That noisy? Why is it so loud? Who's shouting over there?"

"Did you guys forget? That's the recording 'studio' for the King of Masked Singers concert!"

"Damn, what happened over there?"

"I don't know, but it does sound like a lot of screaming."

"Does it have to be so electrifying?"

...

The sky was getting heavier.

The dark clouds were growing and rain was drizzling.

There was no forecast of rain during yesterday's weather report, so the program team did not full preparations for such an event. They immediately deployed some employees to set up several temporary parasols to cover the equipment.

The stadium was not specialized to handle concerts, but as time had been too tight for them to get a proper place, they had to make do with this venue. In the entire stadium, only part of the grandstands facing the stage were sheltered. Meanwhile, the rest of the grandstands and the stage were all in the open air. As many of the equipment was not waterproof, they were forced take emergency measures to protect them. However, that would only be effective under light rain conditions.

But they were really unlucky to meet with such trouble today.

The wind started picking up!

The rain became heavier too!

The audience hurriedly took out their umbrellas and put on their raincoats.

"It's getting heavier!"

"Quick, go and take shelter!"

"What's with this weather!"

Some people in raincoats insisted on staying where they were.

A lot of the audience members seated in the front ran back a few rows. There was a large zone there where they could take shelter from the rain for a bit.

His parents had not brought umbrellas with them today.

His mother complained, "How could it rain just like that!"

His father said, "The weather reports are getting more and more inaccurate these days!"

Beside them, Wu Zeqing took out an umbrella from her bag. "Auntie, Uncle, take this umbrella and share it." Then she opened it up and handed it to them.

His father said, "No, no!"

His mother did not accept the offer either. "Shelter yourself!"

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "I don't need it. If it gets too heavy, I'll head back for shelter."

"How can that be fine!" His mother did not expect Chief Wu to be so polite.

Fortunately, Xiao Lu came running over right at this moment. "Auntie, I have a raincoat over here. I'll give it to you and go look for another. If there are extras, I'll get more for you!" She didn't bother with other people, nor could she care too much about them. But since these were Teacher Zhang's parents, she must definitely look after them properly. There was a relationship here, after all.

His mother said, "Aiya! Thank you then, Xiao Lu."

Wu Zeqing smiled. "That came at just the right time. Let Uncle have the raincoat. Auntie and I can share the umbrella." She

leaned closer to Zhang Ye's mother and held up the umbrella.

His mother reached out to take the umbrella. "Let me hold it."

Wu Zeqing said, "There's no need. You don't have to be so polite with me."

Backstage.

Recording had temporarily been suspended.

The singers and program team staff were all looking for a place to take shelter from the rain.

Hu Fei asked loudly, "How's it looking? Can we still record?"

Hou Ge ran over and said, "It's possible since the cameras are all waterproof, but the instruments and performers are not. With all that rain and wind out there, it's impossible to sing!"

Fan Wenli looked at the sky.

Zhao Qiquan shook his head. "I'm afraid this rain won't be stopping anytime soon."

Over there, Zhang Xia, Amy, Li Xiaoxian and a few others were all standing under a temporary sunshade tent to hide from the rain.

Zhang Ye came up. "How many songs are left?"

Hu Fei was holding an umbrella and said, "There's still three or four songs left for the set. We were only slightly more than half-done with the concert schedule. There's still a choir that we invited to perform, as well as the group closing song that all of you were scheduled to sing."

Xiao Lu returned. "Brother Hu, the rain is getting heavier."

Hu Fei clenched his teeth and said, "Let's wait a little longer!"

After five more minutes.

The weather did not look like it would get any better.

King of Oddity shook his head and said, "We can't sing anymore. The weather won't allow us to do so."

Zhao Qiquan (Flowing Time) added, "I think we should cut the recording short. They can't play music out there anymore. Furthermore, the rain has already gotten so heavy. How can we still sing? Let's quickly disperse the crowd and get everyone home."

Amy sighed, "It's true. We can't carry on recording."

Zhang Ye looked over at the audience and saw that no one had left yet.

Hu Fei said, "Then—"

"Let's wait a while," interrupted Zhang Ye.

Hu Fei looked at Zhang Ye and nodded. "Alright, let's give it another five minutes."

Zhao Qiquan frowned and wondered why they still bothered to wait. The weather was clearly not going to clear up!

King of Oddity also gave a slight shake his head. Who could sing in this bloody weather? There might be a bit of a shelter in the grandstands, but no place on the stage could shield them from the rain!

However, the program team staff did not have any objections to waiting. With Zhang Ye's words already spoken, it was as good as Hu Fei saying them himself. Whenever even Hu Fei could not make a decision on something, he would usually seek Zhang Ye's advice.

Soon after.

The rain did let up a little but still did not stop.

Chen Guang also spoke up, "We really won't be able to sing if it goes on like this."

Xiao Lu anxiously said, "Brother Hu, Director Zhang."

Dong Shanshan was holding an umbrella and talking to the audience from the stage at this moment. "Would everyone please wait for a bit. I have to seek advice from the program team on how to proceed."

At this time, Xiao Lu hurriedly walked up to the stage and whispered some instructions to Dong Shanshan.

Dong Shanshan nodded. "Alright, I understand." Then she looked at the audience and said, "I'm terribly sorry, but this sudden downpour was not something that we had anticipated. We were not prepared to handle such weather, so we sincerely apologize on our part. We can't continue recording, so the concert will end here. Please get ready to leave the stadium and remember to give way to each other."

When they heard this, many of the audience members started shouting!

"But why?"

"The rain's not that heavy; it's only a moderate shower!"

"We still wanna listen!"

"So few songs have been performed!"

"Can't we have a few more songs?"

"We're fine!"

"Right, we don't want to go!"

"It was so good! Let us have another song!"

Several dozen audience members were already starting to stream out of the stadium.

However, a majority of the audience did not move. They stared at the stage without blinking, some of them sitting in their seats in their raincoats or carrying umbrellas!

Dong Shanshan urged, "Please start exiting the stadium. We're

truly sorry about today. Recording will stop here because the musical instruments cannot be played in the rain, so it isn't possible to perform anymore. You all can see for yourselves that the stage is open air. We also did not wish for this to happen."

"Sing a few more songs!"

"We really haven't had enough yet!"

"I came up from Shanghai just to attend this concert!"

"Just one song would do. Must we end it like this?"

"We don't need any musical accompaniment. Just sing a cappella!"

All of a sudden, someone led a chant.

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Flowing Time!"

They all chanted the stage names of the contestants!

The audience was eagerly waiting for them to appear back on stage. This concert had excited them so much that hardly any of them were willing to leave!

Dong Shanshan was out of ideas. "We're really—"

From out of nowhere, Zhang Ye came up onto the stage. "Hand me the microphone."

Dong Shanshan looked at him and then handed him the microphone. Seeing that he was without an umbrella, Dong Shanshan wanted to shield him from the rain.

However, Zhang Ye fluttered his hand in refusal. He did so

because he saw many people in the audience who were still out in the rain. Since they didn't have umbrellas, he didn't want to be shielded by one.

The rain was soaking Zhang Ye's shirt.

Dong Shanshan had no choice but to hand the stage over to him and went back down by herself.

Facing the audience, Zhang Ye stood in the rain and said, "We can't carry on recording. The cameras have already stopped. No one can predict the weather, but we were in the wrong too. Please give me some face and quickly go home. It's too cold out here, and the rain is getting heavier as well. It's a shame about the concert, but—"

"But we really want to continue listening!" a middle-aged man shouted.

A girl yelled, "We're not afraid of the rain! Really!"

A mother said, "My kid loves to watch your show. Can we have a few more songs to listen to?"

Zhang Ye said loudly, "But today's weather..."

Suddenly, a little girl of around nine years old somehow made her way up onto the stage. She probably came up via the side stairs, which the staff forgot to watch due to the rain becoming heavier.

The little girl was holding a kids' umbrella with floral patterns on it and walked straight up to Zhang Ye's side.

Zhang Ye was startled by her, not knowing what she was doing up here. He was just about to tell her that his place was restricted to non-authorized personnel when the little girl pushed the umbrella toward him.

The little girl was very short and trying very hard to stand on her tippy toes to get the umbrella over Zhang Ye's head.

Zhang Ye was taken aback by this action and quickly knelt down.

When a few staff members saw this, they ran over in panic to lead her away.

But Zhang Ye put his hand up at them to stop them from coming over.

The little girl finally managed to shield Zhang Ye with the umbrella. "Brother, please. Can you please sing a few more songs? I will shield you and not let the rain get on you."

The umbrella was very small and could only shield one person at most.

In the blink of an eye, the girl's clothes were wet.

Zhang Ye asked, "Then what will we do about you getting wet?"

The little girl said determinedly, "I'm not afraid of that!"

Zhang Ye took the little girl by her hand and pushed the umbrella back over her head. "Do you really...wish to keep listening?"

The little girl nodded vigorously. "Me, my parents, and my brother, we all like you! And we also like Sister Petal Shower and Sister Spinach too!"

Zhang Ye smiled then. He turned to the audience and looked at the stubborn audience members who were still sitting there. He suddenly asked, "Do you guys really want to keep listening?"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

In an instant, the shouting thundered!

It even drowned out the rumbling of the thunder!

Zhang Ye smiled again. "Everyone's not afraid of getting wet?"

"No!"

"No!"

"Afraid, my balls!"

Everyone shouted in unison!

Zhang Ye smiled for the third time. He carried the little girl down the stage and returned her to her mother. Then he went back onstage and looked around it for something.

Xiao Lu was stunned. "Director Zhang, what are you doing?"

Han Qi also asked, "What are you planning on doing?"

The Miracle Wheels band also said, "The rain is so heavy. You..."

Hou Ge added anxiously, "The cameras have already stopped. We're not recording any more today! You don't have to..."

Stopped recording?

Won't be broadcasting this?

What did all that have to do with him?

The audience was still here!

The audience had not left yet!

If they are not afraid, why should I be afraid?

If they are not leaving, how can I leave?

Chapter 1090: Singing three songs in a row!

"Director Zhang!"

"What are you doing?"

"We really cannot keep performing in these conditions!"

"The rain's too heavy! How can we sing?"

"Have you gone crazy?"

"Teacher Zhang, you can't really intend to..."

Backstage, a lot of people were frantically trying to dissuade him.

When they saw Zhang Ye grab an acoustic guitar placed there, the program team, contestants, and celebrity guests all had a look of incredulity on their faces. They knew that Zhang Ye really meant to go onstage and perform. On this windy and rainy day, he was really going to go onstage and sing!

What are you trying to achieve?

Why are you doing this?

Zhang Ye did not say anything and simply strode onto the stage. By the time he finished setting up the microphone stand, he was soaked from head to toe. Then he started playing the acoustic guitar and a melody floated out!

In the midst of the pouring rain, Zhang Ye's voice reverberated through the skies!

The first line of his song stunned the crowd!

What am I trying to achieve?

I'm not trying to achieve anything!

He sang loudly 1 .

"Inside of my heart, I once had a dream.

"To make you forget all of your anguish with my singing.

"Brilliant starry night, who is the true hero?

"It's ordinary people who inspire me the most."

The audience was stunned!

Everyone was stunned!

The next second, screams came from all over the stadium!

He was singing!

Zhang Ye was singing!

He really did not leave!

He really came back on!

Zhang Ye sang and played at the same time.

"No more hate, and no more pain.

"Now if only throughout the world of man love reigned.

"Let's use our songs to gain your sincere smiles.

"And bless you with an extraordinary life from now on.

"Seize every second and minute of life!

"Spare no effort chasing after our dreams!

"Without wind and rain, how can you see a rainbow!

"No one can succeed at it with just one go!

"Seize every single inspiration in life!

"Enthusiastically embrace your beloved friends!

"Let sincere words, and tears of joy!

"Ebb and flow and swirl in our hearts!"

The Miracle Wheels band were all staring with dropped jaws!

They swore that they had never heard The Clown sing this song before during his rehearsal sessions. When did you write such a song? You can just come up with a song as and when you like? You

can just start singing something the moment you open your mouth?

Han Qi shouted, "Great! Fantastic!"

Hu Fei suddenly grabbed hold of Hou Ge. "The cameras! Are the cameras on and recording this?"

Hou Ge turned to look at the cameras that were facing the stage. "They're on! Two cameras are on!"

Hu Fei yelled, "Turn them all on! All of them!"

Hou Ge said, "All?"

Hu Fei shouted, "Hurry up!"

Hou Ge immediately said, "OK!"

When the song ended, the applause was thunderous!

It was clearly raining!

The rain was very loud!

The acoustic guitar that Zhang Ye was playing did not have enough volume to be heard in such a noisy environment!

Yet the applause was so loud! It was at least twice as loud as when most of the singers performed before the rain! This happened because the audience was moved. Because someone was willing to stand out here in the wind and rain and sing for them! To them, celebrities were all very precious figures. Especially an S-list star like Zhang Ye. They were even more precious than most. Everywhere they went, they would have bodyguards surrounding and protecting them!

But Zhang Ye was not like that!

He was really singing for them!

He was sincerely singing for them!

Even if he was drenched by the downpour!

Wu Zeqing showed a happy smile.

His mother was also very excited. "That's how my son is! That's how he is!"

Wu Zeqing said, "Your son was born with a special kind of charm. Many people find it odd that others would like a celebrity with a temperament like his. But for me, I think those people who don't like him are odd."

Zhang Xia gave a wry smile. "What a nice song!"

Chen Guang was also getting a little pumped up listening to him!

The audience was chanting:

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

Brilliant starry night.

Who is the true hero?

You're the hero today!

At least to us, you're everyone's hero today!

The next second, the guitar melody switched up!

Zhang Ye did not even take a breather for more than a minute. He sang 2 .

"Black coffee is a little strong.

"I just need the lightness of soda.

"Daydreaming during this heat wave.

"I dreamed that I became a rainbow.

"I have the urge to start running.

"With you here, even falling down is fine.

"I will chase my dreams without fear.

"Our sweat records our glory.

"There are all kinds of characters in a movie.

"And every one of them has a dream of their own.

"Negativity on the big screen just isn't shown.

"I wanna hold your hands in the rain! And! Wait! For! The! Rainbow!"

In the rain?

Wait for the rainbow?

The audience instantly cheered!

Zhang Ye pointed at the little girl who came up onto the stage earlier to give him an umbrella and pointed at everyone as he sang.

"You say I am your superhero!

"As well as your occasional guest punching bag!

"I'm perfectly happy to accept this honor!

"To be the firefly by your side!

"Ah, oh, ai!

"So if I really am your superhero!

"Let me sing you this love song at this time!

"Love blossoms with a little understanding!

"I'll be the hero you're the proudest of!"

The audience chanted in unison.

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

This was the second song!

No, that's not right!

Counting "Vast Horizons," this was his third song in a row! Further, he was singing in this heavy rain without even taking a break!

A few of Zhang Ye's fans felt their hearts ache and cried!

"Rest for a while!"

"Teacher Zhang, rest for a while!"

"The rain is too heavy!"

"Teacher Zhang!"

A lot of people were shouting!

Hu Fei also said anxiously, "Quick, go and tell Zhang Ye to take a break. He better not have something happen to him!"

The physical exertion on a person during a rainy day was very large. To go all out and be singing like the way that he did, even a man of steel would not be able to take it. During the first episode of King of Masked Singers, Zhang Ye had nearly collapsed due to a high fever and "cold." At that time, he really gave everyone on the program team a huge scare!

However, the very next second!

The melody of the guitar in Zhang Ye's hand changed again. He started playing and jumping around at the same time!

Once!

Twice!

Thrice!

His playing sped up!

The melody sped up!

Suddenly, Zhang Ye used a very high-pitched voice that a normal singer would usually not be able to reach and scream-sang 3 .

"I won't get tired at all!"

"I have danced for three days and three nights!

"I'll get drunk just drinking soda in this state!

"Oh!"

Hu Fei was dumbfounded!

Spinach was dumbfounded!

All of the audience members were also stunned. But right afterwards, the atmosphere reached a high!

A lot of people were pulled along by the rhythm of the music and started screaming and jumping as well!

Zhang Ye played the guitar and laughed loudly at the same time:
"There's no way I'll get exhausted!

"I wanna dance another three days and three nights!

"I feel so light that I believe I can fly!"

All of a sudden, the Miracle Wheels drummer rushed up onto the stage and took his seat. He started playing a beat!

The Miracle Wheels guitarist roared with laughter. He could not use the electric guitar in this circumstance, so he grabbed another acoustic guitar and went up on stage as well!

Zhang Ye sang loudly.

"Join in along with me!

"Jumping from morning till night!

"You won't lose out being happy!

"Don't even think to refuse!"

The stadium hit a fever pitch!

Screaming was coming from every directions!

"Three days, three nights, into the late night, dancing without a stop!"

"Three days, three nights, into the late night, staying up with just music!"

"Three days, three nights, into the late night, all that's left is sweat!"

"Three days and three nights, into the late night! Ba ba ba! Ba ba ba ba ba!"

Zhang Ye shouted at the top of his lungs!

The pitch of his voice went higher with every syllable he sang!

"I won't get tired at all!"

"I won't get tired at all-l-l-l!"

"I won't get tired at all-l-l-l-l-l!"

" True Heroes 4 "!

" Superhero 5 "!

" Three Days and Three Nights 6 "!

Performing three songs in a row, Zhang Ye left the audience in a state of utter shock!

Chapter 1091: Please put your hands up and wave them for me!

The rain continued to fall!

The wind was still blowing!

But the atmosphere in the stadium had somehow reached its highest point!

"Ah!"

"This is so good that I could die!"

"Zhang Ye is so awesome!"

"Where did he get all those songs from!"

"Yeah, how did he write all that!"

"Could he have written them beforehand? Or did he come up with it spontaneously?"

"Damn, surely he couldn't have made that up on the spot, could he?"

"Then why does every line in the songs fit the atmosphere here so well?"

"Who knows!"

"This is what you call genius!"

"I love him to death!"

"A singer like that, a guy like that, how could anyone not like him!"

"Zhang Ye! Zhang Ye! Zhang Ye!"

On the stage.

Zhang Ye was already experiencing shortness of breath as he made his way down the stage. However, he did not look like he was

tired at all. In fact, he kept smiling even though the raindrops were hitting his face. It was like he was totally unaware of it.

Han Qi was getting anxious. "Teacher Zhang, rest for a bit!"

Zhang Ye waved her off and said in a hoarse voice, "Do you have water?"

"Yes! Yes! I'll go get it!" Xiao Lu ran off to get some water.

Fan Wenli came up to him with an umbrella. "Director Zhang, you're like this." She gave him a thumbs up and continued, "Whether it's your singing, personality, or character, I'm really impressed by you."

The other singers and guests looked deeply at Zhang Ye.

They all knew that recording wouldn't continue anymore, so there was no need for them to perform. The cameras had been stopped, so even if you continued to sing, there wouldn't be anyone other than the ten thousand-odd audience members at the venue watching. Was there a need to continue singing? Was there a need to do so much?

Zhang Ye was feeling extremely thirsty, and he gulped down three mouthfuls of water.

Han Qi and Xiao Lu stood around him with umbrellas as they used towels to wipe his face and hair, wet from the rain.

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I'm different from you guys. All of you are better qualified and started at a better position than me. About my matters, Old Yao should know them the best."

Yao Jiancai was also present today. When he heard that, he laughed and said, "Back when Little Zhang and I were banned, we couldn't get any work and could not even take any commercial appearances. You could say that we were left with no options at all. Do you guys know what we ended up doing? We went to join the Crosstalk and Skit Competition.

At that time, the stage was much smaller than this place that we're at now. There were also much fewer people in the audience, probably around a hundred to two hundred at most. We knew very well that Central TV might cut our scenes in the broadcast, but we still practiced day and night without rest and took our crosstalk performance very seriously. Every joke segment was rehearsed and tweaked so many times. You wouldn't know how it felt, but as long as there was a single audience member watching, we would definitely do our best and put on a good show."

Zhang Xia was silent.

Chen Guang was silent.

Liao Yiqi, Zhao Qiquan, and the others were also silent.

Yao Jiancai laughed and said, "So after that time, Little Zhang and I changed a lot. Picking what shows to appear on? Acting like big shots? Both of us know very well that we were not qualified to do so."

But now, they could do so.

They were qualified to be picky!

They could behave like big shots if they wanted to!

However, the motivation they experienced during those days was something they would never forget for the rest of their lives. When they were at their wits' end, when everyone had left them for dead, when they were faced with so many sets of cold and doubting eyes offstage, someone had actually shouted their names in excitement, cried for them, and cheered them on.

It was like a wisp of fire in the ice plains that was so heartwarming. From that, they knew they had not been totally given up on yet and that there were still people waiting for their return! That kind of feeling just couldn't be described with words. It was truly an unforgettable experience for them!

During our most difficult times, all of you accompanied us by

encouraging and supporting us.

So now that you guys wanted to continue listening to us sing?

How could we not sing for you!

What reasons could we have for not wanting to sing for you!

Zhang Ye picked up his microphone and smiled. Then he went up onto the stage again.

Looking at his receding figure, Fan Wenli, Amy, and the others suddenly felt in awe of him!

The audience was screaming.

"He's coming!"

"Zhang Ye is coming back on again!"

"He still hasn't left! He hasn't gone yet!"

Applause rang out all of a sudden!

Round after round of applause. Some people even threw aside their umbrellas to clap with all their might!

Hearing the applause and seeing the excited crowd, Zhang Ye suddenly thought of many past incidents. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Then, he raised his microphone.

Zhang Ye crooned 1 :

"Once again, I drowned in the sound of applause.

"You looked so excited in front of me.

"In the dark,

"the world has seemed to have stopped turning.

"Our hands are not needed for our hearts to embrace."

The audience froze!

Is this song...written for us?

Are you...singing this song for us?

Suddenly, Zhang Ye walked off the stage and strode toward the audience. Then he took out some foldable umbrellas and raincoats he found backstage and opened up one to hand to a female audience member who was sitting there in the rain and constantly shouting Zhang Ye's name.

That teenage girl was startled, and she immediately teared up. "Teacher Zhang!"

Zhang Ye handed the umbrella to her and sang: "If I get lost in the storm one day.

"I know that you will heal the pain and allay it."

He handed another umbrella to a middle-aged audience member.

"Perhaps our worlds are always going to be a bit unique.

"But I know that you will stay with me through the bleak and shrieking storm!"

The teenage girl covered her mouth and started crying!

He walked another two steps before giving out a raincoat to a couple who was here with their child.

He did not open an umbrella for himself!

He did not put on a raincoat for himself!

Zhang Ye just sang loudly.

"Please raise your hands and wave them again for me!

"Then I will know just where you are standing!

"Life passes in a hurry!

"I hope we can share our glories!

"I hope our dreams will never fail!"

Pandemonium spread through the crowd!

Some of them started crying!

Someone raised their hands and waved them about!

Followed by a second person!

10 people!

100 people!

1,000 people!

"Please raise your hands and wave them again for me!

"Then I will know just where you are standing!

"Perhaps one day I'll get too old to sing or to walk!

"But I will still offer you my sincerest smile!"

All of a sudden, Zhang Xia led the way and walked over as well!

Fan Wenli!

Liao Yiqi!

Chen Guang!

Amy!

Li Xiaoxian!

All of them gradually followed as well!

They each held an umbrella in their hands and walked toward the audience. Then they handed them to the audience members who were still standing in the pouring rain and exposed themselves to the weather in the process of doing so!

A male fan was overwhelmed by this. "No, I can't accept this!"

But Fan Wenli did not say anything and just gave the umbrella to him.

Then.

Zhao Qiquan!

King of Oddity!

And all of the other singers also followed along!

Zhang Ye continued singing.

"Much thanks for going through thick and thin with me.

"Thank the Heavens

"that I have you to understand me.

"I'm grateful that we can still smile "through our tears.

"Although we must treasure every single moment we have together!"

The rain overhead seemed to have stopped.

Zhang Ye looked up and found that there was an umbrella over him.

He continued walking forward and another umbrella opened for him!

With every step that he took, another umbrella opened up over his head!

Zhang Ye did not know why, but his hands started trembling and his eyes also reddened from out of nowhere.

Fan Wenli, Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, Amy, and the others had come forward and were standing together with Zhang Ye!

Zhang Ye sang loudly.

"Please raise your hands and wave them again for us!

"Then we will know just where you are standing!

"Life passes in a hurry. I hope we can share our glory. I hope our dreams will never fail!

"Please raise your hands and wave them again for us!

"Let us keep the love burning in our hearts!

"Perhaps one day I'll get too old to sing or to walk!

"But I will still offer you my sincerest smile!"

This was the last song of the day!

It was the last song on King of Masked Singers!

But this was not the end yet!

Believe me, anytime you guys need me.

I will surely be there!

I will definitely be there!

Everyone was waving their hands!

Everyone was waving their hands for them and shouting their names over and over again!

"Zhang Ye!"

"Zhang Ye!"

"Fan Wenli!"

"Li Xiaoxian!"

"Zhao Qiquan!"

"Zhang Xia!"

"Chen Guang!"

This song had elevated the concert to new heights!

A single person had made a stadium of 10,000 people wave their hands for him!

Chapter 1092: Celebrity Rankings Index maintenance completed!

The next day.

Saturday night.

Today was the broadcast of the King of Masked Singers' closing concert!

Those who did not have the chance to attend the live recording were all waiting at their televisions. They switched their channels to Beijing Television and were nervously looking forward to the start of the broadcast.

They were anticipating it so much because they really wanted to listen to Zhang Ye, Fan Wenli, Li Xiaoxian, and the others' sing again, especially since it was a live concert as well as the farewell concert of King of Masked Singers.

As some of the singers did not take off their masks to reveal themselves until the grand finals last week, everyone was still left wanting for more. They were nervous because everyone knew that there was a sudden downpour in Beijing last night and that the concert venue was in an open-air space!

So how could they sing?

How did they manage to record?

Would they stop the concert halfway through?

The show started broadcasting.

The singers made their appearances one by one.

Sure enough, a light spattering of rain could be seen on television screens halfway through the concert. There was also a very strong wind gusting!

Dong Shanshan announced onstage that recording would be cut

short.

"As expected!"

"Why didn't they carry on recording!"

"Uh, it ended just like that?"

"Surely not, right?"

"I haven't heard enough yet!"

"How can this be? Has it really ended?"

"I've been waiting the entire week and they only sang those few songs?"

"It can't be helped. The rain was really too heavy."

"Right, we have to be understanding too and not blame them for it."

However, just when everyone started discussing this and when many of them were about to change the channel or turn off their television, they suddenly heard a singing voice coming from it. It stunned everyone!

...

"True Heroes".

"Inside of my heart, I once had a dream.

"To make you forget all of your anguish with my singing."

...

"Superhero".

"You say that I am your superhero!

"As well as your occasional guest punching bag!"

...

"Three Days and Three Nights".

"I'm won't get tired at all!

"I have danced for three days and three nights!"

...

Old Zhang's home.

Ning Lan and Fang Weihong were also here today.

Watching Zhang Ye on the television playing and singing simultaneously in the rain, they were all stunned!

Fang Weihong couldn't help but say, "This is really nice to listen to!"

Ning Lan exclaimed, "Those songs were all written by him?"

Zhang Yuanqi laughed and said, "Ning Lan, I think there will be a threat to your spot in the Celebrity Rankings Index this year."

"Hmm? Ning Lan blinked and said, "Surely Zhang Ye couldn't be on such a heaven-defying streak, could he? My popularity gained this year should be quite good. I have taken seven movie projects, and I'm now at second place on the A-list rankings.

Zhang'er's popularity ranking is still not updated since the system is still undergoing maintenance. Even if they include all the songs that he sang today, he couldn't possibly jump straight from the bottom two places of the A-list to the front few, could he? No one has ever done that before!"

Fang Weihong, who also seemed very optimistic about Zhang Ye's chances, said, "There was no such precedence before, but that doesn't mean that it won't happen. You can't use common sense with him!"

...

At Peking University.

Summer break had arrived, but a lot of the students did not go back home. It was not that they were unable to get hold of the bus tickets, but that many of them wanted to stay behind to finish watching King of Masked Singers!

At the moment, uproars occurred in many of the dormitories!

Many students were screaming one after the other!

"That was so exciting to watch!"

"Ahhhh!"

"Professor Zhang is so cool!"

"I can feel my blood coursing through my veins in excitement!"

"Me too! I had an eargasm!"

"How exhilarating! That was so damn exhilarating!"

...

When the last song was performed, the emotions of every single viewer around the country watching on Beijing Television reached a crazy high!

"Much thanks

"for going through thick and thin with me.

"Thank the Heavens

"that I have you to understand me.

"Please raise your hands and wave them again for me!

"Then I will know just where you are standing!"

Zhang Ye's fanbase numbers exploded!

The most direct indicator was the number of followers on his Weibo, which had already reached an alarming 25 million people. In the few days after Zhang Ye had taken off his mask during the King of Masked Singers grand finals, his follower count on Weibo had increased by about a million per day. It could be said that this growth was defying the heavens to the extreme!

"Zhang Ye, you're fantastic!"

"Teacher Zhang, we should be the ones thanking you! It was you who went through thick and thin with us! It's you who

understands us!"

"As long as you're around, we'll raise our hands and forever wave them for you!"

"Right, forever!"

"What an impact!"

"Why wasn't I present that day?!"

Back at home.

Zhang Ye was currently on the phone with Hu Fei.

Zhang Ye said in surprise: "Why did it get broadcast?"

Hu Fei laughed and said: "How could we not include such impactful scenes?"

Zhang Ye said nervously: "I thought you stopped recording?"

"We did say so at first. But when you opened your mouth to sing, I quickly got the staff to turn on all the cameras." Hu Fei laughed and said: "If this part had been lost, it would have been such a shame."

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile and said: "The musical accompaniment was not clear enough and the noise from the rain was so loud that it affected the microphone's reception. My singing was also just average, so I'm not satisfied with how I did."

Hu Fei said: "Look at how the stadium was at the time. There were so many people who were moved by the performance, and you're still saying that it's only average? Everyone, including me, felt that it was very good. I can guarantee that even if you had recorded the songs in a studio, you would not be able to get such a good atmosphere like we had from the live audience."

The musical accompaniment could be improved on and the environmental noise like the rain could be removed, but we won't be able to replicate the same kind of atmosphere and impact it had on the audience. Therefore, this is already the best version there

is!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said: "I guess. You're the executive director, so your say is what matters."

...

On the same night.

At 12 AM.

Weibo buzzed with activity.

"It's almost out!"

"Are the latest celebrity rankings out yet?"

"Not yet."

"I wonder if Zhang Ye's name will be there after the rankings are refreshed today."

"It hasn't been fixed yet? Didn't they say it would be out by this week?"

"Yeah, it's already Saturday. Why hasn't it been updated yet?"

"How much will Zhang Ye's popularity score increase by?!"

Many of Zhang Ye's fans were waiting at their computers and constantly refreshing the ranking index. They really wanted to know what Zhang Ye's ranking was now!

It wasn't only Zhang Ye's fans.

There were also netizens from everywhere else.

And those industry insiders from the entertainment industry.

Everyone was getting really curious because Zhang Ye's performance on King of Masked Singers was simply too shocking. The show had created yet another viewership legend with the published nationwide viewership rating of the grand finals' live broadcast standing at 3.89% and setting a new record in the process. Coupled with several billion views online throughout the

entire run of the show, it could be said that the majority of people had watched the show. Together with the farewell concert, everyone was wondering just how popular Zhang Ye had gotten!

At 12:05 AM.

The rankings were suddenly updated!

There were exclamations throughout Weibo!

"The rankings are out!"

"The updated rankings are out!"

"It has been updated!"

"Zhang Ye's name is in there!"

"The rankings have been fixed!"

"Holy shit! Quickly have a look!"

On the latest Celebrity Rankings Index, Zhang Ye's ranking had vanished from the last two places on the A-list rankings!

He overtook one person!

He overtook five people!

He overtook ten people!

Jiang Hanwei.

Huo Dongfang.

Zhang Ye jumped past all of them in one leap!

At this moment, Zhang Ye's name glittered at the third spot on the A-list Celebrity Rankings. There were only two people ahead of him. One of them was a superstar who was ranked first on the A-list and the other was Ning Lan, who was ranked second!

He had reached the top of the A-list rankings!

Zhang Ye had reached the top of the A-list rankings in the span of one night!

He was nearing the S-list Heavenly Kings and Queens in front of him!

No one had experienced such an explosive one-time surge in their popularity before. At the level of the A-list Celebrity Rankings, the difference in the popularity scores that separated each position was enormous. Some people might be able to jump from the E-list to the C-list celebrity rankings overnight, but the popularity score difference for such a jump would probably not even compare to the difference in popularity scores between the last and third to last places on the A-list Celebrity Rankings!

At the level of the A-listers, every step taken was fraught with difficulty! It would require a massive leap in popularity in order to surpass the person ahead in the rankings. As such, before the appearance of Zhang Ye, there hadn't really been any major changes in the A-list Celebrity Rankings for many years!

But now the wolf arrived!

On this night, Zhang Ye's ranking moved up by more than 10 spots!

The netizens were shocked.

"Oh my God!"

"Third? He's ranked third in the A-list rankings?"

"Zhang Ye has entered the ranks of the superstars?"

"Holy shit, that was too fast! That was too fucking fast!"

"Dammit! Zhang Ye is really too heaven defying!"

"The difference between an A-list celebrity's popularity score can be huge and on a completely different level. A celebrity at the bottom of the A-list rankings would at most be considered a big name or big shot. Only the top three A-list celebrities are considered superstars! And yet, Teacher Zhang reached that spot in just one night? I'm floored!"

"This is too frightening!"

"Teacher Zhang has ascended to the thrones of the superstars!"

"How long has it been since he was promoted to A-list? And now, he's almost reaching the top?"

"Ahhhh!"

The industry was also in a state of shock!

They had thought about how Zhang Ye's popularity might surge by a lot, and that it might even be an unprecedented kind of surge. But still, they never expected it to increase by so much!

Third in the A-list rankings?

A domestic superstar?

This was simply unbelievable!

China's ranks of superstars had actually ushered in a "raffish"...host!?

Chapter 1093: The Superstar's Crew!

The next day.

Early in the morning.

The weather was clear and there were clouds drifting across the sky outside the window.

Some people went to bed early last night and did not know about what had happened after midnight. It wasn't until this morning when they woke up that they realized that something big had happened in the entertainment industry. It was already everywhere in the newspapers!

"Zhang Ye joins ranks of superstars!"

"Third ranked A-list celebrity!"

"Shooting to fame overnight! An unprecedented rise!"

"The popularity score that took the entire rankings system down!"

"Zhang Ye's ban lifted!"

"King of Masked Singers: Zhang Ye's best move!"

"Zhang Ye returns!"

"Zhang Ye's friends offer congratulations!"

"Many in industry speechless and have yet to express thoughts!"

It was also as lively over on Weibo!

"What?"

"Zhang Ye rose to third in the A-list rankings?"

"Damn, what happened while I was asleep?"

"Congratulations, Teacher Zhang! This is such exciting news!"

"Zhang Ye the Mighty!"

"Teacher Zhang, work harder and move up further, to the S-list!"

"Pfft, I think it's better to forget about the S-list. He only just experienced a breakthrough in his popularity, but it hasn't stabilized yet. Let's wait for Teacher Zhang to consolidate his position first. Only then will he be considered to be among the superstars."

"This is so awesome!"

"So there are actually so many people who like him?"

The country was still in a state of shock!

Everyone was discussing this turn of events, be it on the television, newspapers, or online. Even in the streets, the discussions were all about Zhang Ye.

...

At his parents' house.

Zhang Ye was actually quite calm at this moment.

His phone had woken him up early in the morning and it hadn't stopped ringing since.

His old classmate, Yu Yingyi:

"My superstar classmate, how are you?"

"Ha! Are you poking fun at me?"

"Can I ask you how you're feeling right now?"

"I just feel like sleeping for a while longer. I've been tired out by all that has happened in recent days."

"You've gotten really popular now. You're the most popular host in the country right now. There has never been a professional host who has ever reached the level you're at now. This has never before happened in the history of hosting either. Haha, you've really done the bunch of us old classmates proud this time, and also brought glory to us broadcast hosts!"

"Whoa, are my contributions that great?"

"Of course, so you should treat us to a meal."

"Hai, was that what you were really after, woman!"

Ning Lan's call:

"Congratulations."

"Thank you, Sister Ning."

"Please have mercy on me. You're right behind me in the rankings."

"Oh, come on. I can't possibly surpass you."

"You say that. I'm just afraid that you'll suddenly pass me the moment I take my attention off you. I've decided to take on another two film projects this year. The momentum of your popularity is way too strong."

"I'm still far behind you in terms of our popularity."

"It's not that great a difference anymore. Are you trying to blindside me and then suddenly deal me a heavy blow?"

"Damn, am I such a person?"

"Did you think you had a good reputation? Haha!"

Liao Yiqi.

Chen Guang.

Fan Wenli.

Yao Jiancai.

Dong Shanshan.

Zhang Zuo.

Ci Xiufang.

More than a dozen friends called to offer their congratulations.

After a full hour of receiving calls.

Zhang Ye was no longer feeling sleepy. He hummed a ditty and got out of bed to wash up. Looking out into the living room, he shouted twice and found that his parents were not home. His mother had probably dragged his father out somewhere to boast. He smiled at the thought of that but was actually already quite used to it. Then he checked the fridge and took out some leftovers to reheat for breakfast.

What was different about being a superstar?

To him, it didn't feel like there was any difference.

Just look, he still had to eat leftovers.

He was not exactly prepared for this surge in his popularity either. He might seem rather calm now, but he was really not prepared for it. He had suddenly reached third place on the A-list rankings? If this had happened to anyone else, they would also be in for a shock. Thinking back now, Zhang Ye had set a goal for himself this year to see if he could climb up into the A-list rankings. But he never thought he would only need a few months to get there.

And who would have thought that he would even make it to third place after just another few months of being on the A-list rankings! He had as good as jumped several rungs, each time further than the last. It was no wonder that the industry insiders and netizens found it difficult to accept since even Zhang Ye himself was quite stunned by it!

At this moment, Rao Aimin called.

To return a very big favor, Old Rao had now taken on the role of Zhang Ye's agent. Although Old Rao had quite an unreasonable personality, did many things quite half-heartedly, and also possessed a sharp tongue, she still handled many of Zhang Ye's matters diligently. At least, she had never let him down when it came to his work.

Old Rao: "What are you up to?"

Zhang Ye laughed. "I just finished eating."

"You're still in the mood to eat? I haven't slept a wink since last night!" Rao Aimin immediately started scolding: "Did you have nothing better to do than go onto King of Masked Singers? Why did you have to go and sing? Now that you've become so popular, I'm starting to get all kinds of inquiries. Do you know how many calls I've taken in these past few days? Huh? Over 200!

Seven film crews invited you to take part in their productions, eight television stations wanted to cooperate with you on some shows, nine music companies were hoping to sign a contract with you, and 60-plus commercial performance leads came knocking on your door. There were also some other calls which I don't really remember anymore!"

Zhang Ye hurriedly said: "It was hard on you, hard on you."

Rao Aimin said impatiently: "Are you gonna take any of those offers?"

"Not for now. I want to rest up for a period of time first." Zhang Ye said: "Besides, I haven't thought of what I want to do next, so let's wait it out for now."

"Alright, I understand then." Rao Aimin even instructed at the end of the call: "Don't get any more famous than you already are. It's good enough. Don't overdo it."

Zhang Ye didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Eh?"

Rao Aimin suggested: "If you're free and have nothing to do, go and scold more people and get into more fights. Make yourself less popular. Alright, I'm hanging up!"

Zhang Ye said: "It's only for a while. It'll get better as soon as the popularity dies down."

An agent requesting for her celebrity client to not get too

famous? To go and scold more people? Get into more fights? What the fuck, what kind of requests were those? In the entire industry, perhaps only Rao Aimin would say something like that!

However, Zhang Ye was not angry about this. Old Rao was never really an agent to begin with. She was just an amateur agent who did things according to the mood she was in. He got Rao Aimin to be his agent simply for the reason of "protection." He had made too many enemies and offended too many people. If he had appointed someone else to be his agent, Zhang Ye would definitely be worried about them. What if something were to happen or his enemies wanted to take revenge? If that happened, Zhang Ye would have brought harm onto others.

But if it was Old Rao, he wouldn't have to worry. She had more or less fully recovered from her injuries by now, so not even several dozen people would be able to get close to her. Further, she could help Zhang Ye turn down some work as well. This made things much simpler for Zhang Ye. Otherwise, he would have had to handle everything and answer all the calls by himself. Even if there were 25 hours in a day, it wouldn't be enough, so he could only trouble Old Rao with this for the time being.

Ring, ring, ring.

It was a call from his junior sister.

Yang Shu said: "Senior Bro, do you need me around today?"

"I don't. What are you planning to do?"

"Then I won't go over to your place. I'm teaching shadowboxing now."

"Don't get into trouble with the Urban Management Bureau 1."

"Ah, OK."

Right now, Zhang Ye's team was simply a motley crew of people.

The four of them could basically be labeled as the oddest team of

people in the entire entertainment industry.

The star, Zhang Ye: The publicly acknowledged most wondrous person in the entertainment industry.

The agent, Rao Aimin: A martial arts grandmaster without a proper job. A well-known hooligan of the martial arts world who hopes daily for Zhang Ye's popularity to drop.

The bodyguard-cum-chauffeur, Yang Shu: A rash woman who only thinks of making Taiji Fist famous again. Often found giving out pamphlets to the elderly in the closest neighborhoods and asking them to take up Taiji shadowboxing, dealing a blow to the town square dance group that was just starting to get popular!

Logistics, Wu Zeqing: The only normal person among all of them.

Hai.

This was what made up a superstar's crew. Sometimes, Zhang Ye even felt that it would be too embarrassing to speak of this to others.

It would be a long road ahead.

There was still much left to do.

Chapter 1094: Zhang Ye's request for leave!

Later that morning.

His parents were still not home yet.

He watched television.

Listened to music.

It felt like a pretty good way to spend his time.

Zhang Ye was ready to give himself half a month of break and not take on any jobs for the moment. He would just not bother with anything and rest up for a period of time. Every time he had a major breakthrough in his career, Zhang Ye would do this afterwards.

It could be said that this was a habit of his, and the media and citizens had also gotten used to this casual attitude of his. Further, now that Zhang Ye had successfully gained entry into the ranks of the superstars, he would need to rest for an even longer period of time. As the saying goes, to rest is to prepare for a stronger challenge ahead. After he had taken a long enough break, he would go back and continue causing a stir in the entertainment industry. He still needed to think of a way to get to the top of the A-list rankings, so how could he not recharge first?

Ring, ring, ring.

The calls kept coming. There were reporters seeking interviews and advertisers who bypassed his agent to get in touch with him directly to invite him to take some commercial filming. Zhang Ye rejected all of them.

He decided to make an announcement on Weibo.

Zhang Ye: "Applying for half a month's leave. I will not be taking any work in this period of time so that I can get some rest. If there are any urgent matters, please contact my agent."

After he posted it, Zhang Ye called Wu Zeqing.

"Old Wu, where are you?"

"I have a meeting today in the suburbs."

"You're so busy on a Sunday too?"

"Is something the matter?"

"I miss you. What time will you be back from the meeting?"

"It should end at around 3 or 4 in the afternoon, but I need to go back to my parents' place first. They arranged a blind date for me again, so I need to go back to sort it out them."

"They're still arranging blind dates for you? Have you told them about us yet?"

"I've brought it up before but did not mention who you were. I told them that I have a boyfriend and that he has a successful career. I also mentioned that you have quite a good character and are a little younger than me. My mother was quite alright with it and did not say anything, but my father was pretty against it. He did not even ask who you were and just objected to it, so I'll still need to work on him a little."

"Hai, that's tough."

"Let me get everything settled here first before I bring you to formally meet my parents."

"Alright, give me a call tonight after you're done with everything."

"OK."

A blind date?

He would have to seize the chance and quickly marry Old Wu. That was what mattered the most!

After hanging up, he continued browsing through Weibo and was met with a bustle of activity.

Countless netizens had replied to his post!

"Applying for leave again?"

"Pfft, Teacher Zhang is so wilful!"

"With your popularity soaring, now's the best time to make more money. Why are you applying for leave at such a crucial time?"

"In all of showbiz, only Teacher Zhang would do something like this!"

"Hahaha, isn't this how he's always been?"

"Not approved!"

"Right, your leave is not approved!"

"I won't agree to it either!"

"Rejected!"

"The reason for your leave request is inadequate!"

"Rejected! Rewrite your application!"

"Heehee!"

Quite a number of people started bantering.

When Zhang Ye saw this, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry. You guys aren't even allowing me to take a leave of absence? If I don't take some time off to rest and spend time with my girlfriend, she'll run off soon!

He posted an update to his request for leave. "I've nearly forgotten what my girlfriend looks like. I would like to go and see her, so please approve of my leave."

This was a very famous reason to request leave in Zhang Ye's previous world.

When this was posted, a lot of the media personnel and fellow industry peers were taken aback!

"Ah!"

"Zhang Ye has a girlfriend?"

"Who is it? Who is it!"

"Damn, this is big news!"

"There was no news about this before though?"

"When did it happen?"

Suddenly, a lot of netizens started disproving him.

"Don't listen to his crap!"

"Teacher Zhang just likes to brag and talk nonsense!"

"Hahaha, this leave request has really tickled my funny bone!"

"Pfft, Teacher Zhang. Are you really in such a miserable state? You even forgot what your girlfriend looks like?"

"I don't believe it!"

"The issue here is that you need to have a girlfriend first!"

"What is Zhang Ye's criteria for a partner?"

"Right, don't brag anymore. Tell us your criteria and we'll help introduce someone to you."

"Do you want someone pretty?"

"Long or short hair? Big or small eyes?"

"Teacher Zhang, could you be requesting leave to go on a blind date? I'm cramping up from laughing!"

"My sister is really pretty. Let me matchmake the two of you!"

"What are the things you're looking for? Tell us!"

Zhang Ye's request for leave post had suddenly attracted a lot of attention. He was currently very popular and there was a lot of attention on him. But no one expected Zhang Ye to throw out a poem at the next second. A lot of people who saw it were shocked. The beauty of this poem was simply too intoxicating!

Zhang Ye's Weibo:

Carrying an umbrella, all alone.

Pacing up and down this long, long rainy alley on my own.

I yearn to meet

a girl who is like the lilac,

resentful and downbeat.

She has all

the colors of the lilac,

the fragrance of the lilac,

the sorrow of the lilac.

Wistful in the rain,

wistful and halting,

she paces down this deserted, rainy alley, holding an umbrella
just like me,

and just like me she

silently trudges,

aloof, sullen, and brooding.

Silent she approaches,

nearing and casting

a glance like a heavy sigh.

She drifts past

as if just a dream,

as if just a hazy dream, downcast.

As if a lilac

passing through a dream,

this woman passes by my back;

She silently goes far, farther,

and reaches a toppled fence,

leaving this rain lane.

In the rain's mournful song,

her colors wash away,

her fragrance dissipates.

Gone, washed away, even her

eyes that heavily sigh,

her lilac lachrymose.

Carrying an umbrella, all alone.

Pacing up and down this long, long rainy alley on my own.

I yearn to meet

a girl who is like the lilac,

resentful and downbeat.

The netizens were dumbfounded at reading it. Damn, he really could just compose a poem on a whim!

Yet, this was really, incredibly beautiful!

The woman described in this poem was truly beautiful!

All at once, the comments blew up!

"This is the most artistic request for leave that I've ever seen!"

"My heart aches for Teacher Zhang!"

"The woman who's like a lilac has already gone far ahead. Teacher Zhang, hurry up and chase after her!"

"Approved!"

"Approved!"

"You can take your leave now!"

"Teacher Zhang, we'll allow you to go on your break!"

"Hurry and go!"

"Go for it!"

A woman who crossed paths and then headed off into the distance had captivated a lot of the netizens. They did not know which unlucky girl Zhang Ye had set his eyes on, but they definitely had to be supportive of such an important encounter of love!

Only a few people from the literary circle could not resist criticizing Zhang Ye. Their literary upbringing was clearly much higher than the common folks!

Someone from the Writers' Association sighed: "What a good poem! But to use such a good poem in a place like this! Isn't, isn't this too great a waste!"

A person from the CFLAC 1 said angrily: "How could the beauty of this poem be so simple? There's clearly a much deeper meaning to it! How could Zhang Ye use something so grand as his request for leave?"

"What a waste of talent!"

"I'm so angered that I laugh!"

"This Zhang Ye! Having all that talent but using it so carelessly! He pisses me off!"

One of his poems had once again generated heaps of controversy!

Zhang Ye actually understood much better than them that this was not a poem about a girl. It did not just refer to a lilac girl, but more about the vague hopes and desires of a person. But to Zhang Ye, Wu Zeqing was currently all of his hopes and desires.

In his eyes, Old Wu was that lilac girl.

What can anyone do about that?

Bite me?

Chapter 1095: The strangeness of the Lucky Halo!

In the suburbs.

In a conference hall.

During the meeting's intermission, Wu Zeqing suddenly overheard the people beside her whispering while holding their cell phones. There were mentions of Weibo, Zhang Ye, poetry, and something about a request for leave?

She went online to check.

The poem "Rainy Alley" appeared before her eyes.

The colors of the lilac.

The fragrance of the lilac.

A girl who is...like the lilac?

She read this poem five times over before breaking out into a grin. A lot of people around her were stunned from reading this poem as well.

Her cell phone rang.

It was a call from her family.

"Zeqing."

"Dad."

"What time will you be back this afternoon?"

"4 or 5 PM."

"Alright, drive safe."

...

Noon.

Back at home.

Zhang Ye's parents called to say that they were at a relative's place and would not be coming home for lunch. Zhang Ye ended up eating leftovers again for lunch. He sighed to himself at the sorry state of things. He looked at his watch and saw that it was still too early for Old Wu's meeting to have finished. Moreover, she still had to go back to her parents' place in the evening, so it would have to be at least 8 PM before he could get to see her today.

So what should he do in the afternoon?

As a matter of fact, this fellow did not really have any hobbies at all. Ever since he'd graduated, he had always been working, day in and day out. Even when he took leave from his work, he did not really know what to do.

It's time for the lottery then.

Zhang Ye had so many Reputation Points right now that it was even shocking to him.

He activated the Lucky Halo (Upgraded) and chose the Lottery Draw (One) option to play. He decided to place 1,000 additional stakes to see if he could get any new items!

100 million Reputation Points were spent just like that!

The lottery draw began!

The wheel started to spin!

Soon after, the needle came to a stop in the Skills Category region!

[Go Skill Experience Book] × 1001.

Go 1 ?

What would I need this for?

Zhang Ye was speechless. Had the Lucky Halo lost its effect? But thinking about it, similar situations had happened too. The luckiness effect of the Lucky Halo was not 100% effective. Out of a few hundred times, there would be an occasional, ineffective

occurrence. So he wasn't too bothered by it. He started to study the Go Skill Experience Books as he "ate" them one by one. When he came to the last skill experience book, a familiar looking notification popped up, just as he had expected. He had encountered this before!

The Go skill has been maxed out!

He was unable to learn it any further!

Zhang Ye decided not to play Lottery Draw (One) anymore. Since he hadn't tried his luck in Lottery Draw (Two) for quite a while now, he decided to spend another 100 million Reputation Points on it.

He opened the Lottery Draw (Two) interface.

A familiar looking slot machine appeared.

This was the lottery draw that required 10 million Reputation Points per try. If he placed nine additional stakes, that would expend 100 million Reputation Points immediately. But Zhang Ye did not feel the pinch anymore since he had a ton of Reputation Points.

The draw began!

The slot machine started cycling!

One by one, the icons slid past the screens!

Then it slowed, slowing and slowing!

Zhang Ye's Lucky Halo (Upgraded) was still activated. He did not mind what items he would get from the draw as long as it didn't turn out to be empty. Otherwise, these 100 million Reputation Points would go down the drain.

The slot machine came to a stop. The result came out!

Skills Category Treasure Chest (Medium)!

The medium-sized golden chests were about twice as big as the

small chests. When he opened them up, the Skill Experience Book inside turned out to be much larger than the ones in the small treasure chests. It seemed that this was the first time Zhang Ye got a skill experience book from Lottery Draw (Two). But when he saw the name of the skill experience books, he was dumbfounded!

[Go Skill Experience Book] × 10.

Your sister!

It was still Go?

He immediately gave it a try and flipped open the first skill experience book. The book dissolved into glowing light particles and surged directly into Zhang Ye's mind. He could clearly sense that his skill had leveled up, and there was no system notification to say that it couldn't be learned. It looked like his previous guesses were right.

For the Lottery Draw (One)'s Skill and Stats Category items, some of them would max out at a hundred, while some would max out at a thousand. But in Lottery Draw (Two), the enlarged skill experience books in the medium-sized treasure chests would still continue to increase his experience. However, that increase would no longer be exponential and the effect lessened the more he "ate" them.

The 1,000 smaller Go Skill Experience Books that he had just studied cost the same as the 10 larger ones, at 100 million total Reputation Points each. But the 10 larger skill experience books clearly did not have as great an effect as when he "ate" the smaller ones.

This was actually quite normal. To cite an example: A weightlifting beginner could easily go from lifting 25 kg to 50 kg. But to get to lifting 75 kg from 50 kg, it would only get more difficult. Then, to get from lifting 100 kg to 125 kg, it would be even harder. Once it got close to human limits, it would almost be impossible to achieve. The great thing about Lottery Draw (Two)'s

prizes was that it could allow the user to continue increasing the skill level even though the base limits had already been reached. It might seem like the growth rate was negligible, but the actual growth was not the same. This was a really important discovery!

Stamina?

Strength?

This meant Zhang Ye could still get to a higher level in those stats!

Zhang Ye was rather happy to have gained a further understanding of the game ring. But still, he felt that this skill experience book for Go was a bit of a scam. Oh right, the Lucky Halo was still activated.

Just as he was about to deactivate the Reputation Points sucking item, he heard a shuffle of footsteps at the door. With a swish, an ad pamphlet was slotted in through the gap at the bottom of the door.

He deactivated the Lucky Halo and walked to the door to pick up the pamphlet.

Xuanwumen Go Club?

Recruiting members?

Play for free for two hours by showing this pamphlet?

Zhang Ye suddenly realized that there was something going on. Logically, the Lucky Halo would not usually fail. Moreover, the Lucky Halo he was using was an upgraded version, so the effects should be much stronger. Even if it had failed to work properly once, it shouldn't happen twice in a row. Further, someone had even handed out a Go club pamphlet through the door?

Could there be some deeper meaning to this?

Since he did not have anything to do, he immediately decided that he would head there to have a look.

...

Later that afternoon.

Xuanwumen.

As it wasn't far away, Zhang Ye slow jogged over so that he could get some light training in as well. But as he got recognized by people three times along the way, he quickly turned into the alleyways to hide from the attention. Very soon, he reached his destination.

A traditional air exuded from the Go club building that spanned two stories.

He pushed opened the door and entered the building. It wasn't a large place and felt more like a café.

An old man sat at the reception desk.

"Hello, young man."

"Hello."

"Is this your first time here?"

"Yes. This pamphlet says that I can play two hours for free?"

"Let me take a look, please? Oh yes, you can play for free. It's on the second floor."

Clack, clack. He could hear the clink of the Go stones being played upstairs.

Zhang Ye went upstairs to take a look but saw that there weren't too many people at the club. Those who were here were basically just the elderly, so he took off his sunglasses. Since his fanbase did not include the elderly, he thought that it would be fine to just wear his surgical mask as he probably wouldn't get recognized by anyone here. If he had been wearing his aviators inside, it would have made him stand out even more.

He found a spot where no one was at and sat down. Then he

started laying out the stones based on a game record.

Zhang Ye had learned about Go way back then. Of course, he didn't learn it professionally. He only joined those compulsory interest-based classes where they made you learn activities like Xiangqi 3 , badminton, and soccer during elementary and middle school. For some reason, he chose to learn about Go back then. It was because of those classes that he had gained a basic knowledge of Go, although his knowledge was just on how to play it. Though he'd read many game records, he still couldn't grasp many of the basic concepts and wasn't exactly interested in the game either.

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

He sat there by himself. No one came to look for him to play him, nor did he go to anyone seeking to play them. He simply wanted to find out what was going on with the Lucky Halo today.

Suddenly, someone came upstairs.

He turned to look and saw an old man in his fifties. He was wearing in a Chinese tunic suit and dressed very smartly. His eyebrows were pretty bushy, and he looked like he had quite the temper.

When he arrived, the people in the Go club immediately stopped playing.

"Yo."

"Teacher Changhe."

"What a rare guest!"

"What brought you here today?"

"Did you argue with your daughter again? Haha!"

"Or did you get chased out of your house by your wife?"

The several old men were definitely old acquaintances from the

looks of it, bantering the moment he arrived.

That old man who was addressed as Teacher Changhe scowled and rolled his eyes. "You all better keep it down. Do you think I won't slaughter all of you on the Go board? Who wants to have a go? Come on, I'll let you have a handicap of three stones!"

A middle-aged man laughed and said, "We wouldn't dare to play against you even if you gave us a handicap of five stones. Who hadn't heard of your great name all those years ago, Changhe 9-dan?"

Teacher Changhe did not like what he was hearing. He harrumphed, "You make it sound as if no one knows who I am now!"

An old man said in amusement, "You have students everywhere, and so many of them are even national players. I'm sure the entire world knows who you are. Does that sound better to you? There's a popular saying that goes 'a good man does not harp on past glories.' You've been retired for so many years. Why are you still so competitive?"

Teacher Changhe said with a laugh, "But I'm still stronger than the several of you old fogies. You tried so hard all those years ago and still couldn't make it as professional Go players. At most, you're known as dominant players among amateurs!"

9th dan?

A Go 9-dan?

Zhang Ye was taken aback. There was actually such a highly skilled player in this small Go club?

A 9th dan is one of the highest honors in the Go world. Even if one was old or retired, a 9th dan's strength was still at the level of a professional and would definitely be considered a person of distinction in the Go world. What was such a high ranking person doing here in a small, amateur Go club like this one?

Changhe 9-dan said, "I'm not going to continue bantering with you all. I still have something to handle here. Where's Old Lu? We arranged to meet at this time, so where is he?"

"Old Lu just left."

"Ah?"

"I think his wife fell sick."

"That old fogey! I told him that I had something important to discuss with him! How can he delay me like this!"

"What's the matter, Teacher Changhe?"

"Nothing, it's nothing."

Changhe 9-dan was looking pretty unhappy.

Where else could he go to find someone at a time like this?

Suddenly, he glanced over in Zhang Ye's direction. "Eh? Who's that young man?"

An old man looked over. "We don't know him. He just came in a short while ago, I think he's here to play Go? But he didn't approach anyone to play against and has just been laying out stones from a game record all this while."

In this Go club that basically consisted of only the elderly, a young man walking into the premises naturally caught their attention. However, no one went over to interact with him.

Changhe 9-dan walked over to him and had a look at the Go board. His curiosity was piqued and he took a closer look at it. His eyes lit up. "Why have I never come across a game record like this one before?"

Zhang Ye looked up at him and said with a smile, "I was placing them down willy-nilly. I forget where I saw it."

Of course he wouldn't have come across it before. That was because this game record was from a match between two Go

masters from Zhang Ye's previous world. Zhang Ye was just replaying that match.

Changhe 9-dan sat down across from him and scrutinized him "You're a beginner?"

Zhang Ye smiled. "More or less."

Changhe 9-dan asked, "How good are you?"

"I'm OK, I guess," Zhang Ye said conservatively.

The several old men in the Go club were all amused at this reply. OK? How confident!

Changhe 9-dan narrowed his eyes. "Alright, let's play a match."

Zhang Ye thought a little. "Sure."

"I'll let you have a handicap of two stones. Come on!" Changhe 9-dan took the whites stones for himself.

Chapter 1096: Zhang Ye's blind date?

In the Go club.

The atmosphere livened up.

"Quick, let's go and watch."

"Changhe is playing."

"I haven't seen him play Go in a very long time."

"I'll go and watch as well."

"Why is he playing against a young man?"

"I don't know."

The game began.

Zhang Ye was given a handicap of two stones. He did not say anything and just smiled as he started playing his first moves.

Changhe 9-dan made his move. "How should I address you?"

Zhang Ye played a knight's move. "You can call me Zhang."

Changhe 9-dan followed up with another move. "Where do you stay?"

"At Caishikou." Zhang Ye played a diagonal move.

Changhe 9-dan's eyebrows jumped as he said, "Oh, that's not far away. I live in the area as well. Not bad, you're pretty good. Let me test you further."

Clink.

Clink.

The stones were placed down onto the board very quickly.

The two of them were seemingly playing a fast game, taking very little time to think in between each move.

As Zhang Ye was given a handicap of two stones, he naturally had

the greater advantage and that manifested right from the beginning of the game. However, Changhe 9-dan was a professional and had even stood at the top of Go world before. By the midgame, he had gradually clawed back from his disadvantage, exciting the nearby spectators.

"What a great move!"

"This move is really beautiful!"

"Teacher Changhe is still as skilled as ever!"

Changhe 9-dan even chatted as he played. "Haha. Compared to those past years, I'm no longer as skilled. I'm getting on in age and my mind can't function as fast as before."

An old neighbor of his laughed and said, "The main issue is that your temper has grown and your play has become less steady as before."

Someone who did not agree with that said, "But compared to his previous playing style, Teacher Changhe's attack has become much stronger."

An old man had a look at the Go board, then said, "This young man is pretty good. For an amateur to play so well against Changhe is already quite something. If he puts in more effort and practices, he might even be able to turn professional!"

"That might not be the case."

"Right, don't forget that he was given a handicap of two stones."

"The gap between them is still pretty wide."

"This young man has potential."

There were all kinds of evaluations.

The first match ended.

Without even the need for adding compensation 4, Zhang Ye had lost.

But Changhe 9-dan was very happy. "That was a very enjoyable game. In recent years, other than professional players, there have rarely been any amateurs who can play so well against me."

Zhang Ye smiled.

Changhe 9-dan's interest was piqued. "Come, come, let's play another game. I will give you a handicap of two stones as usual."

Although Changhe 9-dan was very familiar with the old neighbors here, he seldom played with them. This was because the difference in their levels was so huge that even giving a handicap would not resolve the issue. He would usually play Go with his disciples instead or go on Internet Go servers to look for his old friends who were professional Go players to be his opponents. But to him, the feeling of playing online by clicking on a mouse was clearly not as good as the real thing. So now that he had met this young man who could compare to him, he naturally would not allow him to leave.

They started a new game.

Changhe 9-dan won again!

Zhang Ye was not bothered by this either. It was as if he was not being serious at all.

However, the others around definitely did not think of it any other way. They thought that this young man had already given his all in order to achieve such results against a former 9th dan Go master.

After three rounds, Changhe 9-dan banged on the table and laughed heartily. "Alright, young man! You'll do." Then, amid everyone's confused gazes, Changhe 9-dan pulled Zhang Ye toward the exit. "Let's go! Come with me!"

Zhang Ye was stunned. "To where?"

"To my place."

"Are we still going to play?"

"No, we won't be playing anymore. Haha!"

"Uncle, I still have something to attend to."

"Whatever it is that you have, you need to postpone it. I'm depending on you to save the day!"

Zhang Ye was at a loss for words. Without even knowing what was going on, he had been dragged to the entrance of a courtyard house by the old man. Once inside, he didn't see anyone else in the courtyard and was unsure if the entire place belonged to the old man's household. Very quickly, he was then dragged off into the northern house by the old man.

In the house.

A middle-aged woman preparing some vegetables looked up, slightly startled. "You're back?"

Changhe 9-dan said with a laugh, "I'm back. Are you preparing dinner?"

Li Qinqin looked at Zhang Ye. "Is this young man Old Lu's son? That's not right. I saw him last year. He doesn't look like that?"

Changhe 9-dan waved her off. "Don't talk about that Old Lu. He'd too unreliable, standing me up at the Go club. There, didn't I still manage to find this young man at the last minute? We even played two rounds of Go together and I found out that he's quite good. I would consider him to be one of the better amateur players around. It's just a shame that he's a bit old. If he were 16, 17 years old, I would definitely have taken him as my disciple."

Li Qinqin grumbled, "You're always doing things like that. Look at him. He doesn't even know what's going on and you've dragged him here. You're really something."

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile. "Auntie, what is going on?"

Li Qinqin apologized, "Child, please go back. This has nothing to

do with you."

"Why're you making him leave!" Changhe 9-dan waved her off. "Never you mind. Our daughter will be back soon. Just make dinner. I'll take charge of this myself."

Li Qinqin didn't know how to react. "You do that."

Changhe 9-dan said, "So what if I do? I just dislike that guy our daughter found for herself."

Li Qinqin shook her head and said, "You don't even know who he is."

"Isn't it enough knowing what his job is?" Changhe 9-dan grunted, "Anyway, I won't agree to it. I'll definitely foil her plans!"

Zhang Ye was confused by what was going on.

Changhe 9-dan's next line scared the living daylights out of Zhang Ye. "Kid, when my daughter gets back, I'm arranging for you two to have a blind date. Do have a good chat with her."

What?

A blind date?

Why would I have a blind date!

Zhang Ye was floored. "I already have a girlfriend."

Changhe 9-dan said, "Uh-huh, that's fine. My daughter definitely won't have eyes for you anyway."

Zhang Ye was floored again. "Uncle, why doesn't that sound right at all to me?"

Li Qinqin blinked. "Young man, what's your job?"

Zhang Ye took off his surgical mask.

Li Qinqin said curiously, "Why do you look a little familiar?"

Changhe 9-dan looked at him and nodded approvingly. "Mhm, your looks are average but you're classy. Otherwise, why would

there be a saying that those who play Go don't lack for class? So what do you do for a living?"

Man, you two really don't know who I am?

Zhang Ye had to nonchalantly say, "I'm a teacher."

Li Qinqin probed further, "What subject do you teach?"

Zhang Ye said, "Mathematics."

"A teacher? That's not bad!" Changhe 9-dan nodded and said, "You even teach mathematics? No wonder you could play Go so well. Mathematics and Go are interrelated. I know some math professors from Peking University who are also quite good at Go."

Bro, I am from Peking University!

Li Qinqin studied Zhang Ye, then said, "It's just that he's too young."

Zhang Ye made to leave. "I really can't do this, so I'll be leaving."

But Changhe 9-dan grabbed him. "Get back here. Do you know how beautiful my daughter is? Huh? Let me tell you this! If you leave now, you'll regret it forever! You are a Go player as well. Don't you know the traditions of our Go world? In times of trouble, aid arrives from all over. You must know that, right? Sit down. No matter what, you must have dinner before you leave. What if, and I'm saying what if, my daughter really likes you? Then that would be a blessing that you've earned through your previous eight lifetimes! Of course, that likely won't be the case." Beaming with joy, he could not help but continue, "You do not know how outstanding my daughter is. She is beautiful, she works as..."

In the end, Zhang Ye was persuaded to stay.

Or rather, he had been held back by force.

Zhang Ye was starting to feel ill at ease and was almost in tears. I'm having a blind date? If this gets out and Old Wu learns about it,

I'll die without knowing how I died! Are you trying to get me into trouble?!

This Lucky Halo is really too much!

I've totally been scammed!

This is simply—

All of a sudden, footfalls came from the entrance of the courtyard.

Li Qinqin's eyes lit up. "Our daughter is back!"

Changhe 9-dan gave Zhang Ye a wink and said, "Perform well and act natural. When you see what my daughter looks like in a while, don't get too shocked. She's really beautiful!"

The footsteps were getting closer and closer.

The silhouette of a person was visible in the courtyard.

Li Qinqin went up to her with a smile. "You're back?"

Changhe 9-dan asked, "Where did you park your car?"

The woman smiled and said, "I parked it at the entrance of the alley."

Then, when the woman spotted Zhang Ye inside the house, she was stunned!

When Zhang Ye saw the woman standing outside the house, he was stunned as well!

Holy shit!

Old Wu?

Chapter 1097: This is my boyfriend!

In the courtyard house.

The two of them stared at one another and saw the shock in each other's eyes. Zhang Ye could not have expected that the woman who came in would turn out to be Old Wu even if he were told this a hundred times over!

What was this?

What was going on?

Zhang Ye's jaw dropped!

Wu Changhe patted Zhang Ye on the shoulder and pointed at the woman who just came in. With a smile, he introduced, "This is my daughter, Wu Zeqing. What do you think? She's good, right? Hur hur, look at you, you're all dumbfounded at seeing her. I was just warning you a moment ago." He was clearly very pleased and proud, thinking that Zhang Ye had been stupefied by his beautiful daughter. "My daughter is a civil servant. She's an official, and an important leader at that, hahaha. Guess which organization she's from. Hmm?"

"Eh?"

Wu Changhe asked again, "Guess! I'm sure you won't be able to guess!"

Zhang Ye didn't know whether to laugh or cry!

Guess?

I won't be able to guess, my ass!

We've known each other for a long time!

Wu Changhe did not even wait for Zhang Ye to guess as he simply announced the answer. "Haha, my daughter is currently an executive at the SARFT. As for what position she holds, you two can talk about it in detail afterwards. I won't go on further about

it." Then he looked at Wu Zeqing and said, "My daughter, this is Little Zhang. A young and promising man who can play Go as well as him at his age is rarely seen. He's considered quite outstanding when it comes to the ranks of the amateur players. I only met Little Zhang by chance today and played a few games with him. It felt great playing against him! Although he paled in comparison to me, and I beat him by quite a large margin even though I gave him a handicap of two stones, he was still quite outstanding. Oh, and can you guess what his job is? Take a guess."

Play Go?

Just met each other?

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "What's his job?"

"A teacher! He's a university professor!" Wu Changhe laughed and said, "What a good job that is! Can you guess what subject he teaches? Hmm?"

Wu Zeqing said, "Chinese."

Wu Changhe shook his head. "Nope, he teaches mathematics."

Zhang Ye wiped his sweat away and said, "About that, I—"

Wu Changhe was an impatient man. "Don't be so wishy-washy. Quickly shake hands and get to know each other, hurry."

Shake what hands?!

Zhang Ye did not know what to say anymore.

It was Wu Zeqing who put out her hand first, in a gentle manner. "Hello, Teacher Zhang."

Zhang Ye forced a smile. He had no choice but to shake her hand in return. "Hello."

Li Qinqin pulled her daughter into the house. "Don't stand out here. Let's talk inside. Zeqing, how long ago was it since you came back home? You should come back to visit us more often."

"I'm too busy at the office and can't get away sometimes." Wu Zeqing glanced at Zhang Ye and said, "Feel free to sit and make yourself at home."

Eh?

Their daughter's attitude wasn't too bad?

It seemed like her attitude had changed?

Li Qinqin looked at her daughter with great surprise.

Wu Changhe was quite happy as he thought that his daughter would be very resistant to the idea of this blind date. "That's right, have a seat. Make yourself at home and don't stand on ceremony with us!"

Sweat started beading at Zhang Ye's forehead. "Alright."

The atmosphere was very awkward!

At least Zhang Ye felt that way!

So this is your father?

So this is your mother?

So this is your house?

Holy shit!

Only now did he realize what had happened, and it wasn't that the Lucky Halo that was ineffective. Instead, it had "coincidentally" helped him to meet his future father-in-law. Further, as luck would have it, he was dragged along by his future father-in-law who needed him to step in for someone else to go on a blind date with his daughter! Thinking about it now, he remembered that Wu Zeqing had mentioned on the phone that she would be going back to her parents' home in the evening as her father had arranged another blind date for her! But he could never have expected that the man who came for the blind date would turn out to be him. Just what the heck was this! This was way too dramatic!

Zhang Ye really was not mentally prepared at all. If he knew that he would be coming to Wu Zeqing's home today, he would have bought things and gotten some gifts no matter what. He had never expected that his first time visiting Old Wu's home would happen under such circumstances that would leave anyone at a loss!

The four of them sat down.

Li Qinqin brewed a pot of tea. "Come, have some tea. I'll go make dinner."

Wu Changhe said, "Yes, just chat among yourselves. Don't worry about us." Even though he said that, he did not move away and continued to sit beside them.

Wu Zeqing looked at Zhang Ye and said with a smile, "You can even play Go?"

Zhang Ye coughed and said, "I learned a little when I was in school."

Wu Changhe added, "He's very good."

Zhang Ye immediately said, "No, no. It's just a hobby and I'm only an amateur."

"Look at Little Zhang. He's so modest," Wu Changhe praised.

Li Qinqin rolled her eyes at her husband. "Don't disturb them. Come and help me with dinner."

Wu Changhe said, "You do it. I want to have a little chat with the young ones."

"Auntie, why don't I come and help you?" Zhang Ye swiftly stood up.

Li Qinqin immediately smiled and said, "No need. You two can carry on talking. The food has already been made and dinner will be served in a bit."

Frankly, Old Wu's character was closer to Li Qinqin's. She was gentle and took after her mother in the looks department, with

their eyes and nose looking exactly alike. Of course, she also inherited some behavioral traits from her father. For example, she was quite authoritative when it came to work, like him. Old Wu might be gentle, but she was never meek.

Before long, dinner was ready.

Wu Zeqing went to help her mother bring the dishes out.

Wu Changhe asked Zhang Ye in a low voice, "How is it? My daughter's not bad, eh?"

Zhang Ye nodded firmly. "She's really good!"

The dishes were served.

Wu Changhe said loudly, "Actually, my daughter cooks very well. Even her mother cannot compare to her culinary skills. She can make any kind of dish and they'll all be delicious!"

Li Qinqin said with a laugh, "If you don't like to eat something, don't eat it."

Wu Changhe laughed heartily. "How can that do? Come, Little Zhang, try your auntie's cooking. Oh yes, what do your parents do?"

Zhang Ye sat up straight and said in a serious tone, "My parents are ordinary workers."

Li Qinqin said, "Mmm, that's good. The labor workforce consists of the most honorable people."

Wu Changhe nodded. "In fact, we're just an ordinary family as well and are not fussy about such things. We're not insistent on looking for someone who is a government official. Or someone rich. Or require them to be from a family of comparable status. Our family does not have such a mindset as we are very casual people, you know?" He looked at Zhang Ye and said, "We're mainly looking for someone who has a good character and a stable career, like being a teacher. Then, of course, my daughter has to like him

as well and they should share something in common. That's all that matters."

Zhang Ye did not dare utter a word.

Wu Zeqing did not show much of an expression and continued to eat.

Wu Changhe looked at his daughter. "My daughter, what do you think of Little Zhang?"

Wu Zeqing nodded. "He's quite good."

Li Qinqin was taken aback. "What do you mean by he's quite good?"

"I'm quite happy." Wu Zeqing smiled.

Li Qinqin gasped in surprise. She felt that her daughter was behaving differently today. In the past, whenever she had a blind date, she would not even turn up to meet the person. When it got unavoidable and she had no choice but to meet them, she would always come up with some excuse, like being needed back at the office, before leaving quickly. So why now was she inviting Little Zhang to have a seat and telling him to make himself at home? She even said things like how she was happy with him? This had never happened before! Did the sun rise up from the west today?

Wu Changhe was also very surprised. "Oh? Then...there's a chance to progress further?"

Wu Zeqing smiled as she scooped some food for both her parents. She said, "Dad, you really know how to choose someone. From a sea of a billion people, even if you narrowed down the range to only Beijing, there are still more than ten million people to choose from. In the end, you just had to bring the most unlikely guy back here."

"Hmm?" Li Qinqin blinked several times.

"What do you mean by that?" Wu Changhe was also confused.

Wu Zeqing pointed at Zhang Ye and said, "The two of you really don't know who he is?"

Zhang Ye gave a hollow laugh.

Wu Changhe said, "I know. He's Little Zhang."

The elderly couple really did not watch much television nor paid any attention to the matters surrounding the entertainment industry.

Li Qinqin suddenly stared at Zhang Ye. "I found him somewhat familiar right as he came in. It's, it's like I've seen him somewhere before."

Wu Zeqing put down her chopsticks and said with a smile, "Then let me reintroduce him to you. The gentleman before you is indeed a university professor. That's not false. It's also true that he teaches math. But the two of you definitely do not know that he holds a title at Peking University and that he is an associate professor in the Math Department."

Li Qinqin was startled. "Peking University? Didn't you used to be the vice president of Peking?"

Wu Changhe stared with mouth agape. "Associate professor? How can there be such a young associate professor at Peking University?"

Wu Zeqing continued, "At the same time, he's also a lecturer in the Chinese Department at Peking University and holds the title of Visiting Associate Professor at Media College. He's as real an academic as you can get." She then paused when she saw her parents' stunned faces. She added, "By the way, he still has some other identities as well. For example, he's a calligrapher, a famous radio host, a famous variety show director, a famous documentary director, a famous singer, a musician, an actor, a famous poet, a famous author, a lawyer, and so on and so forth."

Wu Changhe jumped to his feet!

Li Qinqin asked in surprise, "Th-The two of you already know each other?"

They had figured out who this man was!

Someone who held all these titles in the all the nation—there could only be one!

The next moment, Wu Zeqing held onto Zhang Ye's arm very naturally and introduced him calmly to her parents, "This is Zhang Ye, my boyfriend."

Li Qinqin opened her mouth wide. "Ah?"

Wu Changhe panicked. "What did you say?"

"This is your boyfriend?" Li Qinqin didn't know whether to laugh or cry!

They finally understood why their daughter had said those things that didn't make sense to them earlier! From the millions of people in Beijing, Wu Changhe had actually dragged his daughter's real boyfriend whom he had always objected to to their home for a blind date with his daughter! What was the damned probability of that?

Wu Changhe nearly vomited a mouthful of blood!

Chapter 1098: I will give you a handicap of two stones!

This was too dramatic!

And it was too unbelievable as well!

How could there be such a coincidence?

Even in television dramas, there wouldn't be such a fucking coincidence!

In an instant, Wu Changhe flew into a rage as he banged on the table and pointed at Zhang Ye. "So you're the rascal that duped my daughter? You still have the cheek to sit here? Huh?"

Zhang Ye sat there in a daze. "Huh? Didn't you tell me to make myself at home?"

Wu Changhe said furiously, "What makes you think that this is your home? Go back to wherever you came from! Get up, get up right now!"

Zhang Ye wiped his sweat away and stood up obediently.

Wu Changhe pointed at him and said, "You got me good, you rascal. Did you plan all of this? You knew that I would be going to the Xuanwumen Go club today? Did you go in advance to lie in wait after my daughter tipped you off? Then insist on following me home, leading to this situation? Huh? Was it you?"

Feeling wronged, Zhang Ye said, "Bro—no, Uncle, I didn't even know where you lived and Old Wu has never even mentioned to me who you are, so how could I possibly know that you were going to the Go club today? And it just so happened that Uncle Lu's son whom you were looking for did not show up? It's not like I'm a fortune teller or something. Besides, I did not insist on following you home. It was you who dragged me here. I didn't even know what was happening!"

Wu Changhe said angrily, "You're still denying it?"

"But it was really you who dragged this young man here," Li Qinqin spoke fairly. "When Little Zhang found out that he was here for a blind date, he even wanted to leave. But you blocked the door and refused to let him go."

Wu Changhe didn't say anything.

It was clear that this was just a coincidence!

Li Qinqin muttered to herself, "Could it really be fate?"

Wu Changhe yelled, "What fate!"

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Dad, let's eat for now." Then she pulled at Zhang Ye for him to sit down and continue eating.

Wu Changhe said, "Do you think I still have an appetite?"

But Wu Zeqing was still as calm as ever. She even gave some food to Zhang Ye. "Try this. My mother is also very good at making chicken wings. She taught me all my culinary skills."

"Oh." Zhang Ye had a taste and said, "Mmm, delicious!"

Wu Changhe shouted, "I won't agree to this anyhow! I won't allow it!"

"Keep it down." Li Qinqin smacked her lips and said, "Little Zhang has come as a guest. Besides, after all's been said and done, you were the one who dragged him to our place."

Wu Changhe quibbled, "I was deceived by him!"

Wu Zeqing looked up. "Dad, can you sit down and eat for now? We'll return to this after dinner. We can't solve anything on an empty stomach, don't you think?"

Wu Changhe sat down angrily. But he did not take another bite of food as he was not in the mood to eat anymore. He had found Zhang Ye to be pretty pleasing to the eye before this. After all, there weren't that many young people who would put in the effort

to play Go. But at this moment, Wu Changhe found Zhang Ye to be very unlikable no matter how he looked at him. He wished that he could grab a rolling pin and chase him out of the house!

Wu Zeqing's mother did not have any negative feelings for Zhang Ye. On the contrary, she seemed to be quite interested in him.

Li Qinqin looked at him. "Little Zhang, the two of us don't usually watch television and couldn't recognize you just now, but we've heard a lot about you on more than one occasion. Your reputation precedes you, so I was really curious about you and have always wanted to meet you. But I never expected that we would meet under such circumstances."

Zhang Ye said respectfully, "It's an undeserved reputation that was given to me by the public. Auntie, I've actually wanted to pay you a visit for a long time, but there hadn't been an opportunity to do so. If I knew that I would be here today, I would have brought something along. I feel bad that I didn't get gifts."

Li Qinqin asked, "How many people are in your family?"

Zhang Ye said, "There's only my parents and me."

"You don't have any siblings?"

"I'm an only child."

"How did you get to know my daughter?"

"The first time we met was on a plane. Old Wu invited me to teach at Peking University when she was still the vice president. That was quite a while ago."

Li Qinqin blinked. "How long have you two been together?"

Zhang Ye coughed and said, "About a year."

"We didn't even know about it." Li Qinqin gave her daughter a look.

Wu Zeqing laughed. "How would I dare let you two know when Dad is like this?"

Li Qinqin smiled. "That's true."

Wu Changhe raged and addressed her by name, "Li Qinqin, whose side are you on?"

Li Qinqin replied, "I think Little Zhang is quite good. I don't know much about the entertainment industry nor do I know any of those celebrities. But I've still heard of Little Zhang's name many times before. Even though he is young, he has many accomplishments. Moreover, I heard that Little Zhang helped out a lot with Little Mo's and Little Chubs' (Fat Sis) companies. It's all because of his help that their companies managed to do well. Didn't they mention that during our last meal together? They were especially thankful to Little Zhang, saying that if not for him, their companies would have gone bust! Little Zhang has given his best and really done a lot for our family."

Zhang Ye was extremely touched!

He did not expect that Wu Zeqing's mother would actually speak up for him!

Wu Changhe said angrily, "I'm telling you, I will declare this first: I will not accept this, definitely not. So what if he is very accomplished? No matter how accomplished he is, he is still someone in the entertainment industry! Don't you know what sort of people are in that industry? There are hardly any good people in there! That industry is just a messed up place! The age difference and earnings are both not issues here. But no matter what, she mustn't get married to someone in the entertainment industry! Are you trying to push our daughter into a fiery pit of suffering?"

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Then you can think of him as a university professor."

"I can't do that." Wu Changhe said, "That is not his main career!"

Wu Zeqing said, "Aren't you making things difficult for me this way? When I said that I found someone, you told me that you were

not fine with it. Alright, now that you've brought someone back and I accepted him, you're telling me no again? Dad, I can make my own decisions and know what I'm doing. If it's someone I like, no one can talk me out of it."

Wu Changhe said angrily, "Why are you so naïve? Don't you know what kind of reputation this Zhang Ye has? His character is already questionable. How can you marry a person like him?"

At this, Zhang Ye could no longer just listen quietly.

Zhang Ye's eyebrows jumped as he interrupted, "Uncle, I won't say anything if you criticize me on other matters. But if you say that my character is questionable, I won't accept it."

Li Qinqin looked at Zhang Ye in surprise.

Wu Changhe had a bad temper, but so did Zhang Ye.

There were issues that he could back off on.

There were issues that he could give in to.

But some things, he had to speak up when something needed to be said!

Wu Changhe stared at him. "You won't accept it?"

Zhang Ye said slowly, "It's not that I don't respect my elders. But if you say that my character is questionable, I must definitely take it up with you. I can't pretend that I didn't hear it."

The two of them immediately started to quarrel!

They had quite an exchange of words, but neither of them was willing to give in!

Li Qinqin quickly mediated by saying, "There's no problem with Little Zhang's character. He saved a lot of people during the plane hijacking incident back then. Didn't you also say it just now? That he plays Go exceptionally well. You've said that those who can play Go well never have bad characters."

Wu Changhe sneered, "He plays well? You really believe the words that I casually said? By that skill of his and me giving him a two stone handicap, I can still beat him by 6 points and above without needing to wrack my brains. His Go skill is so lousy. How well could he possibly play! Judging by his Go technique that was full of rashness and unsteadiness, it would be a wonder if his character can be good!"

Wu Zeqing put down her chopsticks and wiped the corners of her mouth with a napkin in an even manner. "Enough. Little Ye, let's go."

Li Qinqin said, "Stay awhile longer and eat more."

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "If we continue eating, these two will soon start a fight. Little Ye and I will go back."

However, Zhang Ye was not about to leave just yet. "That won't do. We have to clear up this matter about my character first. Uncle, I can sense that you're deliberately targeting me."

Wu Changhe couldn't help but laugh. "You still don't want to admit that you play a lousy game of Go?"

Zhang Ye said, "Does that mean that a person who can play Go well will automatically have a good character?"

"Of course. Go is a kind of self-cultivation. Those who exploit others by taking advantage of the situation and people with questionable characters would never be able to play it well." Wu Changhe grunted.

Zhang Ye nodded. "Alright then, let's use Go to sort it out. We'll play another match. Are you fine with that?"

Wu Changhe was amused. "You still want to play against me? You're far from as good as me! Even if you practiced for another 50 years, you still won't be a match for me! You couldn't beat me even if I gave you a handicap of two stones!"

However, Zhang Ye's next line stunned everyone in the house!

Zhang Ye said, "This time around, let me give you a handicap of two stones!"

There was a Go board with specialized seats in the house. Having said that, Zhang Ye walked right over and sat down. He took the white stones 1 and looked at Wu Changhe. "Go ahead."

You're giving me a handicap?

Of two stones?

Wu Changhe nearly burst out laughing!

Li Qinqin gave a bitter laugh. "Little Zhang, your uncle here was ranked as a 9th dan in Go back in his day."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Auntie, I know that."

Wu Changhe laughed in anger. He sat down heavily on the side of the black stones. "Alright, you think that you can beat me just because I didn't play seriously just then? Haha!"

Zhang Ye said with a smile, "What a coincidence. I wasn't playing seriously either."

The atmosphere became really tense!

The conflict between these two escalated!

Li Qinqin knew that she could not dissuade them, so she did not say any more and spectated. She was no stranger to Go. Although she was not good at playing, she still knew how to watch a match of Go.

It was the same for Wu Zeqing. She quietly walked to the rear of Zhang Ye. She understood Go as well, of course.

Wu Changhe didn't try to be polite nor have the bearing of a one-time 9th dan professional player. He grabbed two black stones and slapped them down on the Go board with a sneer. "You're giving me a handicap of two stones, right? Good! Let's see how you're going to play!"

Li Qinqin frowned. "Changhe, what are you trying to do?"

Wu Changhe said, "He was the one who spoke arrogantly first and gave me a handicap of two stones. I'm just abiding by his wishes." He said to Zhang Ye, "Come, let me see what you look like when you get serious!"

Taking the white stones, Zhang Ye's expression had already changed. It was a completely different look from the way he was while at the Go club in the afternoon. It was as though he had totally become another person now.

Clink!

Zhang Ye placed his stone!

Wu Changhe glanced at him as he laughed and placed his stone too.

Knight's move.

A move followed.

Horizontal stretch 2.

Placement 3.

Another knight's move.

Followed by another move.

Extension 4.

As he played, Wu Changhe kept mocking, "What lousy moves. Do you even know how to play? You even want to make a diagonal move over here? What's the point of doing that? Have you ever seen any professional players play like that? You're a total amateur!"

But gradually, Wu Changhe's words lessened until he did not have anything to say.

Li Qinqin was stunned!

Wu Zeqing suddenly smiled!

That "diagonal move" that Zhang Ye made just now had made Wu Changhe break out in a cold sweat!

Holy shit!

What kind of move was that?

This way of playing had rarely been employed by anyone in the past!

Wu Changhe's expression changed.

...

Two hours later.

Their match lasted a full two hours.

Zhang Ye placed the last stone down with a loud clink.

Wu Changhe's face had turned green from anger!

How could that be possible!

Just how could that be possible!

Li Qinqin also looked at Zhang Ye in disbelief!

He lost!

Wu Changhe had actually lost!

And he even lost after given a handicap of two stones!

Zhang Ye said, "You were saying earlier that those who can play a good game of Go would surely have a good character? So it looks like my character isn't that bad after all, huh?"

Chapter 1099: Arranging a battle against his future father-in-law!

In the house.

The three of them were stunned by Zhang Ye's Go skill!

You won?

How did you manage to win?

Nowadays, Wu Changhe was admittedly no longer that commandeering Changhe 9-dan from 20 years ago. His Go skill had regressed and he was already way off from the peak of his prowess. Go might seem like it was a game that many middle-aged people and the elderly played. But in fact, the top players in the world were all young people. At least, there weren't many that were past the age of 40.

However, if one used to be an elite player in the Go world, they would still be an elite player now. Even if their skills had regressed, it would still not be easy to beat them. They were still regarded to be at the professional level and definitely not just at the level of those who had recently turned professional. Even if Wu Changhe had underestimated his opponent by not being serious at the start, this should still not have happened! It still did not make any sense at all!

Giving a handicap of two stones?

And he still won?

For a professional Go player, this was as good as demolishing your opponent!

Because for a professional Go player, there shouldn't be talk about giving handicaps at all. Although there was a difference in each person's skill, the difference would never call for giving a two stone handicap. What was the difference indicated by two stones?

That would probably be the difference between a high level amateur and a low level one, or the difference between a professional Go player and a high level amateur Go player!

Li Qinqin said in astonishment, "Little Zhang. Y-Your Go skills are so advanced?"

Wu Changhe angrily banged on the table and stood up. "How devious! You rascal, you're too devious! So you were only pretending this afternoon when we played each other? You were only trying to lower my defenses around you!"

Zhang Ye said, "In any case, I've won."

Wu Changhe said angrily, "What do you mean you won! If I had known you were at the level of a professional Go player, I would have played properly against you! I wasn't being serious at all just now!"

Zhang Ye spread his hands. "It's your problem that you were not serious. I still won anyhow."

"You despicable rascal!" Wu Changhe raged. "You did that on purpose! You must have done that on purpose! Moreover, do you know how many years it has been since I've dabbled in a handicap game? That was a sneak attack! A sneak attack!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes.

Wu Zeqing said with a laugh, "Dad, are you a sore loser now?"

Wu Changhe stared with eyes wide. "Me? A sore loser? Haha, what a joke! If I were to play him seriously, would I possibly lose? My daughter, you're looking down a little too much on your father! At just the mention of my name in the Go community, who wouldn't be afraid of me? If this rascal didn't pull a fast one on me, he wouldn't have won even if I gave him a handicap of five stones!"

Five stones?

Give me a handicap?

Hur hur!

Zhang Ye sneered!

Li Qinqin also rolled her eyes at her husband. "Alright, enough with your bragging."

"You think that I was bragging? Huh?" Wu Changhe said exasperatedly, "Look at this boyfriend that our daughter found. Haven't you seen? He's so devious! I will never approve of him! She can look for any other person, but she must never find a boyfriend like him! He has a questionable character. Let me say this again: His character is too questionable!"

Li Qinqin smacked her lips and said, "He played against you fair and square, and even gave you a handicap of two stones. What do you mean by he's devious? The way I see it, it's your skill that has dropped. You were not a match for him."

Wu Changhe was getting annoyed. "I wasn't playing seriously! If I had, he would surely have been scared to death!"

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Alright, alright, you weren't being serious just now." She pulled at Zhang Ye. "Let's go. Dad, Mom, we'll be leaving now."

Wu Changhe stopped them. He pointed at Zhang Ye and said, "What's the matter? Running away after you've resorted to dirty tricks? Don't run away if you are so good!"

Li Qinqin tugged at her husband. "That's enough."

Zhang Ye had wanted to leave with Old Wu, but when he heard that, he stopped in his tracks and turned around. "I won't leave then. If there's anything you're unhappy about with respect to the game, you can set the rules and I'll accept them."

Wu Changhe laughed furiously. "Alright, kid! You've got balls!"

Wu Zeqing pulled at him. "Little Ye."

Wu Changhe said, "Come on, let's battle it out!"

Zhang Ye said, "Let's do it!"

Wu Changhe said loudly, "Come on then!"

Zhang Ye said, "Alright!"

However, how could Li Qinqin and Wu Zeqing let them play against each other? These two were already on the verge of fighting. No matter who won, it would still cause a fallout. The two of them hurriedly tried to stop them!

Li Qinqin pulled her husband away and said, "You're a good player, alright? You're a really good player."

Wu Changhe fumed, "He couldn't beat me in the first place!"

Zhang Ye was now unhappy. "But I already did."

"That's because you resorted to dirty tricks!" Wu Changhe said angrily.

Wu Zeqing also held Zhang Ye back. She didn't know how to react and said, "Why are you trying to argue with my dad? Let's go already." She dragged Zhang Ye out to the courtyard.

In the end, the two of them continued to argue from either side of the door.

Wu Changhe shouted, "Get back here. Let's play another match!"

Zhang Ye rushed back into the house. "Alright, I'm up for it!"

"I'll give you a handicap of three stones this time!"

"No need! How 'bout I give you a handicap of four stones!"

"I'll give you a handicap of five stones!"

"I'll give you a handicap of six stones!"

"I'll give you a handicap of ten stones!"

"I'll give you a handicap of twenty stones!"

Eventually, the handicap went up to 200 stones!

The two of them started talking big. In Go, each player would

have at most 181 stones to play, so how could they possibly give a handicap of 200 stones! They were basically just bragging to the skies!

Li Qinqin was floored. "You two are really something!"

Finally, Wu Zeqing managed to pull Zhang Ye away.

Just before he stepped out of the courtyard house, he heard Wu Changhe shout, "If you're that great, let's battle again tomorrow! I'll show you what Go is all about! Are you up for that?"

Zhang Ye turned around as he was being dragged off. "Sure, I'll be back tomorrow!"

Wu Changhe said, "You're a whelp if you don't show up!"

...

Outside.

In the alley.

Wu Zeqing's face was covered with sweat from pulling Zhang Ye away from the argument. She did not usually exercise much and did not have much strength either, so having to pull Zhang Ye out of the house took a big toll on her.

"Oh, you!" Wu Zeqing shook her head and smiled.

Zhang Ye harrumphed, "Old Wu, it's not that I'm not giving you face today. But if your dad wants to accuse me of having a questionable character, I won't take that lying down."

Wu Zeqing changed the topic. "Since when did you know how to play Go?"

Zhang Ye said, "I've always known how to."

"You can even beat my dad?" Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "Although, he really wasn't being serious today either. He started that game very casually and allowed you to gain an advantage. It was only because of that that you managed to narrowly beat him."

Zhang Ye said, "Even if your dad got serious, I still won't lose!"

Wu Zeqing said, "That would have to be under the condition of having no handicaps." She took his hand. "Let's go. We didn't even have a proper meal. When we get back, I'll cook for you. After that, let's play a round of Go as well."

"You can play too?"

"I've been playing ever since I was seven years old."

"How good are you?"

"So-so, I guess."

...

A short distance away in the house.

Li Qinqin started complaining to her husband, "Look at you. Why did you have to argue with the children?"

"It was him who started it first!" Wu Changhe sat down and took a sip of tea. He was still quite fired up from earlier. "How dare he pretend to be an amateur in front of me? He was too devious!"

Li Qinqin laughed and said, "I saw his skill just now too. Even if you had been serious and did not give him a handicap, you might not necessarily beat him. Zeqing's boyfriend this time is really something. He's just as legendary as they reported in the newspapers. He's such an astonishing person. I just wonder why his Go skill is so advanced.

Logically, it's not something that can be practiced with just one or two years of play. As a celebrity, where does he find time to practice Go? But I heard that the mathematical conjecture proof that he proposed has almost been verified. He should be the greatest mathematician in the country now, and also a globally recognized world-class mathematician. With the interlinked relationship between Go and math, it's still within reason that he can play so well.

This Little Zhang is really such a marvel. It's no wonder that our Zeqing, who usually sets her sights really high, would like him. I heard that he also got into singing a while ago? I think he even became the champion? And he's already a superstar in the country? It seems like he's really good at everything."

Wu Changhe stared at her. "Did you get duped by him too? He's not good! Not even close!"

Li Qinqin said, "Alright, alright, he's not good. You're the best, hur hur."

This meeting today was truly too funny.

Thinking about it, Li Qinqin couldn't help but find it funny. How could there be such a huge coincidence in the world?

Chapter 1100: The Internet Go server!

The next day.

Early in the morning, 6 or 7 o'clock.

At home, Zhang Ye's mother was already awake while his father was still sleeping.

"Mom, I'm going out."

"Where are you going now?"

"I have some serious business to attend to."

'It was past 8 when you got home last night. Come back earlier tonight."

"Got it."

"You don't have much to do at work anyway, so why are you still always going out every day."

Zhang Ye thought to himself how he really had serious business to handle. This was a matter concerning his marriage!

Outside Old Wu's villa.

Zhang Ye had driven over and used the key to open the door. He changed into his slippers with familiarity and placed the still warm breakfast onto the dining table. He looked up the staircase and called out twice. No one responded. She was probably still asleep.

He headed upstairs and opened the door to Old Wu's bedroom.

A whiff of perfume greeted him as he stepped into the room.

The room was very clean and tidy. Even the clothes Old Wu had taken off had been carefully folded and stacked before being placed at the side. The topmost piece was a nude bra, with a skirt and pale pantyhose placed beside it. These were what Old Wu had been wearing last night. Lying in bed under her blanket, Wu Zeqing's eyes were closed. Her sleep posture was very beautiful and elegant.

A woman's upbringing and her family environment could sometimes be seen from their sleeping posture. Some women might look very elegant during the day. But once asleep, their true colors would be revealed by their sprawled out legs and snores. However, Old Wu's gentleness was something that was etched deep into her bones. She looked especially nice and ladylike even while she was sleeping.

"Old Wu?"

"..."

"Old Wu?"

"Hm?"

"Wake up."

Wu Zeqing was finally awake.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "It's past 7."

Wu Zeqing covered her mouth and yawned a few times, then said with a slight smile, "You're here?"

"Yeah, I bought breakfast. Come downstairs and eat." Zhang Ye said, "After you're done eating, help me call your parents. I'll go over during the day since your dad is waiting for me."

Wu Zeqing laughed and said, "You're still thinking about that?"

Zhang Ye said, "Of course. Your dad scheduled a match with me, I must definitely show up. He already said that if I don't go, I'll be a whelp. So of course I'm still thinking about it!"

Wu Zeqing said, "Alright, I understand. I'll send you over later."

"Don't you need to work?" Zhang Ye was taken aback.

Wu Zeqing smiled. "I'll take the day off, I guess. I'll be worried if you go there alone. If you start arguing with my dad again, my mom won't be able to hold off the two of you for sure."

Zhang Ye harrumphed, "If I can't argue, I will let my skill speak

for itself. If I lose, he can scold me or beat me up however he wants. But if I win, your dad will have to take back his words about my character being questionable! Just ask around. Who wouldn't give a thumbs up when they hear the mention of the name Zhang Ye? Why did my character even get called into question?"

"Right, a thumbs up." Wu Zeqing pulled aside the blanket and had a slow laugh as she slowly moved her slender legs off the side of the bed. She put on her slippers and got up. "Go eat breakfast first. I need to wash up."

Zhang Ye urged, "Quick, Old Wu. I can't wait any longer."

Wu Zeqing said, "Hur hur, I understand."

"Or why don't you make the call first," Zhang Ye said impatiently. "Then we can head over right after breakfast!"

Wu Zeqing had no response.

After eating.

Wu Zeqing called her parents' house.

...

At Old Wu's parents' house.

The telephone in the living room rang.

Li Qinqin and Wu Changhe were both not fond of sleeping in. Although they were retired, they still usually got up quite early. Li Qinqin was already making breakfast.

"Hello?" Li Qinqin answered the call.

Wu Zeqing said: "Mom, you're up?"

Li Qinqin said: "Zeqing, yes. I'm making breakfast right now."

"Is Dad around?"

"He is. What's the matter?"

"Zhang Ye came over to my place and insists that he wants to go

over today. Didn't Dad arrange for them to play another match? He insists on showing up."

"Eh? I'll have to check with your dad about that first."

Li Qinqin walked into the courtyard.

Wu Changhe was doing some stretching and exercises. "Who called?"

Li Qinqin smiled and said, "Our daughter. She says that Little Zhang wants to come over."

Wu Changhe's expression sank. "What does he want to come here for?"

"Didn't the two of you arrange to play another match today?" Li Qinqin didn't know how to react. "You said that you would give him a handicap of 190 stones, and he said that he would give you a handicap of 200 stones."

At this, Wu Changhe gave a sneer and said, "Don't let him come over. I won't see him!"

Li Qinqin said, "But didn't you both arrange a meeting?"

"I just don't like seeing him. I can't be bothered to play Go with him!" Wu Changhe turned around and continued exercising.

Li Qinqin smacked her lips. "You said that whoever didn't show up would be a whelp."

Wu Changhe said coldly, "He thinks that he can play against me with that skill of his? He's still way off. Perhaps if he trains another 20 years in his next life, he could stand a chance playing me!"

Li Qinqin didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Changhe, are you afraid that you'll lose another match to him and won't be able to show your face around?"

When she said that, Wu Changhe laughed on end. "Me? Lose? I'd lose to him? Ai, Li Qinqin, why are you so funny today? I'm not

going to play him for the sake of our daughter, do you understand? Can't you see? If I were to get serious, I could beat him even with my eyes closed! Me? Afraid to lose? Hahahaha!"

She went back into the living room.

Li Qinqin conveyed the message exactly as it was said.

Wu Zeqing was amused. "These two, ai."

Li Qinqin also said with a laugh: "These two grown men have really similar tempers. They're both feisty and want to save face for themselves."

Zhang Ye was nearby listening to the conversation. His ears perked up and he got so close to Old Wu that his cheek was almost touching hers. Then he whispered, "Ask about me, ask about me."

Wu Zeqing laughed and said: "Mom, what do you think of Little Ye?"

"My view?" Li Qinqin thought about it before answering: "I think he should be quite alright. I rather like him as he is quite smart, is knowledgeable, and speaks what he feels. Hur hur."

Zhang Ye was touched by this!

His mother-in-law was the best!

Just look at how insightful she was!

What about that future father-in-law of his? Ai, how can there be such a big difference when it comes to comparing the two of them!

The call ended.

Wu Zeqing said, "I don't think it will be a problem with my mother. She seems pretty satisfied with you. But it should be quite troublesome with regards to my dad. Alright, let's just rest well at home today. You won't be needing to go to my parent's place since my dad does not want to see you."

He's afraid that he'll lose to me!

Wu Zeqing and Li Qinqin probably still did not quite understand it. After all, their Go skills were limited and they were not great at the game. But Zhang Ye understood quite well. He was sure that Wu Changhe also knew very well that he was trying to avoid Zhang Ye so that he wouldn't need to play him!

Zhang Ye suddenly asked, "That's right. Old Wu, does your dad usually play Go online?"

Wu Zeqing said, "Yes. He doesn't go to the Go club often since the skill there isn't high and the people there are not able to play against him. He usually only plays against those disciples of his or the other elite Go players who have retired like him. Besides that, he also goes online to search for an opponent to play against. With the Internet so advanced nowadays, the Internet Go servers are expanding their user base. Many of our domestic professional Go players, and even those from Japan and Korea, go online to search for opponents to play against."

"Which server does he play on?"

"It's called the Online Go Server 1."

"And what is his username?"

"Wu Changhe, his real name."

"Alright, I got it."

"Why are you asking?"

"It's nothing. I was just asking out of curiosity."

You want to avoid me?

Then I will search you out!

Zhang Ye was already as good as in a fight with Wu Changhe now!

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